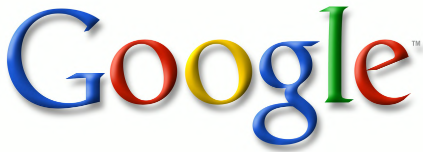

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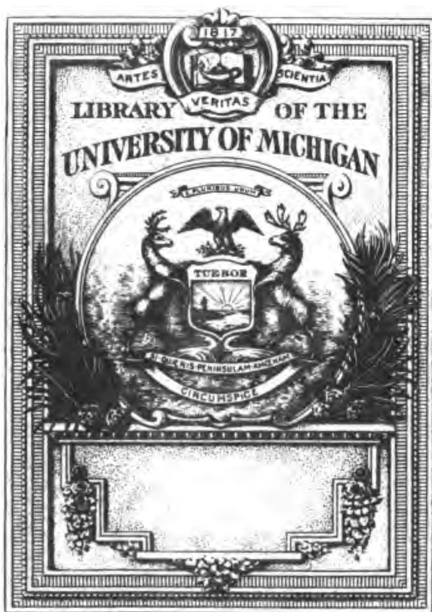

THE GIFT OF
Harry L. Weber
(Estate)

BY ROMAIN ROLLAND

JEAN-CHRISTOPHE
JEAN-CHRISTOPHE IN PARIS
JEAN-CHRISTOPHE: JOURNEY'S END
COLAS BREUGNON, BURGUNDIAN
CLERAMBAULT
THE MUSICIANS OF TODAY
SOME MUSICIANS OF FORMER DAYS
BEETHOVEN
HANDEL
MUSICAL JOURNEYS TO THE COUNTRY OF THE PAST
THE FOURTEENTH OF JULY
THE PEOPLE'S THEATER

CLERAMBAULT

THE STORY OF AN INDEPENDENT SPIRIT
DURING THE WAR

BY
ROMAIN ROLLAND

TRANSLATED BY
KATHERINE MILLER

NEW YORK
HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY
1921

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The Quinn & Boden Company
BOOK MANUFACTURERS
RAHWAY NEW JERSEY

Harry L. Weber (Sc la c)
1-13-70.
843823-291

TO THE READER

This book is not a novel, but rather the confession of a free spirit telling of its mistakes, its sufferings and its struggles from the midst of the tempest; and it is in no sense an autobiography either. Some day I may wish to write of myself, and I will then speak without any disguise or feigned name. Though it is true that I have lent some ideas to my hero, his individuality, his character and the circumstances of his life are all his own; and I have tried to give a picture of the inward labyrinth where a weak spirit wanders, feeling its way, uncertain, sensitive and impressionable, but sincere and ardent in the cause of truth.

Some chapters of the book have a family likeness to the meditations of our old French moralists and the stoical essays of the end of the XVIth century. At a time resembling our own but even exceeding it in tragic horror, amid the convulsions of the League, the Chief-Magistrate Guillaume Du Vair wrote his noble Dialogues, "De la Constance et Consolation ès Calamités Publiques," with a steadfast mind. While the siege of Paris was at its worst he talked in his garden with his friends, Linus the great traveller, Musée, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, and the writer Orphée. Poor wretches lay dead of starvation in the streets, women cried out that pikemen were eating children near the Temple; but with their eyes filled with these horrible pictures these wise men sought to raise their unhappy thoughts to the heights where one can reach the mind of the ages and reckon up that which has survived the test. As I re-read these Dialogues during the war I more than once felt myself close

to that true Frenchman who wrote: Man is born to see and know everything, and it is an injustice to limit him to one place on the earth. To the wise man the whole world is his country. God lends us the world to enjoy in common on one condition only, that we act uprightly.

R. R.

Paris,
May, 1920.

INTRODUCTION *

THIS book is not written about the war, though the shadow of the war lies over it. My theme is that the individual soul has been swallowed up and submerged in the soul of the multitude; and in my opinion such an event is of far greater importance to the future of the race than the passing supremacy of one nation.

I have left questions of policy in the background intentionally, as I think they should be reserved for special study. No matter what causes may be assigned as the origins of the war, no matter what theses support them, nothing in the world can excuse the abdication of individual judgment before general opinion.

The universal development of democracies, vitiated by a fossilized survival, the outrageous "reason of State," has led the mind of Europe to hold as an article of faith that there can be no higher ideal than to serve the community. This community is then defined as the State.

I venture to say that he who makes himself the servant of a blind or blinded nation,—and most of the states are in this condition at the present day,—does not truly serve it but lowers both it and himself; for in general a few men, incapable of understanding the complexities of the people,

* This Introduction was published in the Swiss newspapers in December, 1917, with an episode of the novel and a note explaining the original title, *L'Un contre Tous.* "This somewhat ironical name was suggested—with a difference—by La Boëtie's *Le Contr' Un;* but it must not be supposed that the author entertained the extravagant idea of setting one man in opposition to all others; he only wishes to summon the personal conscience to the most urgent conflict of our time, the struggle against the herd-spirit."

force thoughts and acts upon them in harmony with their own passions and interests by means of the falsehoods of the press and the implacable machinery of a centralised government. He who would be useful to others must first be free himself; for love itself has no value coming from a slave.

Independent minds and firm characters are what the world needs most today. The death-like submission of the churches, the stifling intolerance of nations, the stupid unitarianism of socialists,—by all these different roads we are returning to the gregarious life. Man has slowly dragged himself out of the warm slime, but it seems as if the long effort has exhausted him; he is letting himself slip backward into the collective mind, and the choking breath of the pit already rises about him. You who do not believe that the cycle of man is accomplished, you must rouse yourselves and dare to separate yourselves from the herd in which you are dragged along. Every man worthy of the name should learn to stand alone, and do his own thinking, even in conflict with the whole world. Sincere thought, even if it does run counter to that of others, is still a service to mankind; for humanity demands that those who love her should oppose, or if necessary rebel against her. You will not serve her by flattery, by debasing your conscience and intelligence, but rather by defending their integrity from the abuse of power. For these are some of her voices, and if you betray yourself you betray her also.

R. R.

Sierre,
March, 1917.

PART ONE

Agénor Clerambault sat under an arbour in his garden at St. Prix, reading to his wife and children an ode that he had just written, dedicated to Peace, ruler of men and things, "Ara Pacis Augustae." In it he wished to celebrate the near approach of universal brotherhood. It was a July evening; a last rosy light lay on the tree-tops, and through the luminous haze, like a veil over the slopes of the hillside and the grey plain of the distant city, the windows on Montmartre burned like sparks of gold. Dinner was just over. Clerambault leaned across the table where the dishes yet stood, and as he spoke his glance full of simple pleasure passed from one to the other of his three auditors, sure of meeting the reflection of his own happiness.

His wife Pauline followed the flight of his thought with difficulty. After the third phrase anything read aloud made her feel drowsy, and the affairs of her household took on an absurd importance; one might say that the voice of the reader made them chirp like birds in a cage. It was in vain that she tried to follow on Clerambault's lips, and even to imitate with her own, the words whose meaning she no longer understood; her eye mechanically noted a hole in the cloth, her fingers picked at the crumbs on the table, her mind flew back to a troublesome bill, till as her husband's eye seemed to catch her in the act, hastily snatching at the last words she had heard, she went into raptures over a fragment of verse,—for she could never quote poetry accurately. "What was that, Agénor? Do repeat that last line. How beautiful it is." Little Rose, her daughter, frowned, and Maxime, the grown son, was annoyed and said impatiently: "You are always interrupting, Mamma!"

Clerambault smiled and patted his wife's hand affec-

tionately. He had married her for love when he was young, poor, and unknown, and together they had gone through years of hardship. She was not quite on his intellectual level and the difference did not diminish with advancing years, but Clerambault loved and respected his helpmate, and she strove, without much success, to keep step with her great man of whom she was so proud. He was extraordinarily indulgent to her. His was not a critical nature—which was a great help to him in life in spite of innumerable errors of judgment; but as these were always to the advantage of others, whom he saw at their best, people laughed but liked him. He did not interfere with their money hunt and his countrified simplicity was refreshing to the world-weary, like a wild-growing thicket in a city square.

Maxime was amused by all this, knowing what it was worth. He was a good-looking boy of nineteen with bright laughing eyes, and in the Parisian surroundings he had been quick to acquire the gift of rapid, humorous observation, dwelling on the outside view of men and things more than on ideas. Even in those he loved, nothing ridiculous escaped him, but it was without ill-nature. Clerambault smiled at the youthful impertinence which did not diminish Maxime's admiration for his father but rather added to its flavour. A boy in Paris would tweak the Good Lord by the beard, by way of showing affection!

Rosine was silent according to her habit; it was not easy to know her thoughts as she listened, bent forward, her hands folded and her arms leaning on the table. Some natures seem made to receive, like the earth which opens itself silently to every seed. Many seeds fall and remain dormant; none can tell which will bring forth fruit. The soul of the young girl was of this kind; her face did not reflect the words of the reader as did Maxime's mobile features, but the slight flush on her cheek and the moist glance of

her eyes under their drooping lids showed inward ardour and feeling. She looked like those Florentine pictures of the Virgin stirred by the magical salutation of the Archangel. Clerambault saw it all and as he glanced around his little circle his eye rested with special delight on the fair bending head which seemed to feel his look.

On this July evening these four people were united in a bond of affection and tranquil happiness of which the central point was the father, the idol of the family.

He knew that he was their idol, and by a rare exception this knowledge did not spoil him, for he had such joy in loving, so much affection to spread far and wide that it seemed only natural that he should be loved in return; he was really like an elderly child. After a life of ungilded mediocrity he had but recently come to be known, and though the one experience had not given him pain, he delighted in the other. He was over fifty without seeming to be aware of it, for if there were some white threads in his big fair moustache,—like an ancient Gaul's,—his heart was as young as those of his children. Instead of going with the stream of his generation, he met each new wave; the best of life to him was the spring of youth constantly renewed, and he never troubled about the contradictions into which he was led by this spirit always in reaction against that which had preceded it. These inconsistencies were fused together in his mind, which was more enthusiastic than logical, and filled by the beauty which he saw all around him. Add to this the milk of human kindness, which did not mix well with his aesthetic pantheism, but which was natural to him.

He had made himself the exponent of noble human ideas, sympathising with advanced parties, the oppressed, the people—of whom he knew little, for he was thoroughly of the middle-class, full of vague, generous theories. He also adored crowds and loved to mingle with them, believing that in this way he joined himself to the All-Soul, according to the fashion at that time in intellectual circles. This fashion, as not infrequently happens, emphasised a general tendency of the day; humanity turning to the swarm-idea. The most sensitive among human in-

sects,—artists and thinkers,—were the first to show these symptoms, which in them seemed a sort of pose, so that the general conditions of which they were a symptom were lost sight of.

The democratic evolution of the last forty years had established popular government politically, but socially speaking had only brought about the rule of mediocrity. Artists of the higher class at first opposed this levelling down of intelligence,—but feeling themselves too weak to resist they had withdrawn to a distance, emphasising their disdain and their isolation. They preached a sort of art, acceptable only to the initiated. There is nothing finer than such a retreat when one brings to it wealth of consciousness, abundance of feeling and an outpouring soul, but the literary groups of the end of the XIXth century were far removed from those fertile hermitages where robust thoughts were concentrated. They cared much more to economise their little store of intelligence than to renew it. In order to purify it they had withdrawn it from circulation. The result was that it ceased to be perceived. The common life passed on its way without bothering its head further, leaving the artist caste to wither in a make-believe refinement. The violent storms at the time of the excitement about the Dreyfus Case did rouse some minds from this torpor, but when they came out of their orchid-house the fresh air turned their heads and they threw themselves into the great passing movement with the same exaggeration that their predecessors had shown in withdrawing from it. They believed that salvation was in the people, that in them was virtue, even all good, and though they were often thwarted in their efforts to get closer to them, they set flowing a current in the thought of Europe. They were proud to call themselves the exponents of the collective soul, but they were not victors but vanquished; the collective soul made breaches in their ivory tower, the feeble personalities of these thinkers

yielded, and to hide their abdication from themselves, they declared it voluntary. In the effort to convince themselves, philosophers and aesthetics forged theories to prove that the great directing principle was to abandon oneself to the stream of a united life instead of directing it, or more modestly following one's own little path in peace. It was a matter of pride to be no longer oneself, to be no longer free to reason, for freedom was an old story in these democracies. One gloried to be a bubble tossed on the flood,—some said of the race and others of the universal life. These fine theories, from which men of talent managed to extract receipts for art and thought, were in full flower 1914. The heart of the simple Clerambault rejoiced in such visions, for nothing could have harmonised better with his warm heart and inaccurate mind. If one has but little self-possession it is easy to give oneself up to others, to the world, to that indefinable Providential Force on whose shoulders we can throw the burden of thought and will. The great current swept on and these indolent souls, instead of pursuing their way along the bank found it easier to let themselves be carried. . . . Where? No one took the trouble to ask. Safe in their West, it never occurred to them that their civilisation could lose the advantages gained; the march of progress seemed as inevitable as the rotation of the earth. Firm in this conviction, one could fold one's arms and leave all to nature; who meanwhile was waiting for them at the bottom of the pit that she was digging.

As became a good idealist, Clerambault rarely looked where he was going, but that did not prevent him from meddling in politics in a fumbling sort of way, as was the mania of men of letters in his day. He had his word say, right or wrong, and was often entreated to speak journalists in need of copy, and fell into their trap, taking himself seriously in his innocent way. On the whole he

was a fair poet and a good man, intelligent, if rather a greenhorn, pure of heart and weak in character, sensitive to praise and blame, and to all the suggestions round him. He was incapable of a mean sentiment of envy or hatred, and unable also to attribute such thoughts to others. Amid the complexity of human feelings, he remained blind towards evil and an advocate of the good. This type of writer is born to please the public, for he does not see faults in men, and enhances their small merits, so that even those who see through him are grateful. If we cannot amount to much, a good appearance is a consolation, and we love to be reflected in eyes which lend beauty to our mediocrity.

This widespread sympathy, which delighted Clerambault, was not less sweet to the three who surrounded him at this moment. They were as proud of him as if they had made him, for what one admires does seem in a sense one's own creation, and when in addition one is of the same blood, a part of the object of our admiration, it is hard to tell if we spring from him, or he from us.

Agénor Clerambault's wife and his two children gazed at their great man with the tender satisfied expression of ownership; and he, tall and high-shouldered, towered over them with his glowing words and enjoyed it all; he knew very well that we really belong to the things that we fancy are our possessions.

CLERAMBAULT had just finished with a Schilleresque vision of the fraternal joys promised in the future. Maxime, carried away by his enthusiasm in spite of his sense of humour, had given the orator a round of applause all by himself. Pauline noisily asked if Agénor had not heated himself in speaking, and amid the excitement Rosine silently pressed her lips to her father's hand.

The servant brought in the mail and the evening papers, but no one was in a hurry to read them. The news of the day seemed behind the times compared with the dazzling future. Maxime however took up the popular middle-class sheet, and threw his eye over the columns. He started at the latest items and exclaimed; "Hullo! War is declared." No one listened to him: Clerambault was dreaming over the last vibrations of his verses; Rosine lost in a calm ecstasy; the mother alone, who could not fix her mind on anything, buzzing about like a fly, chanced to catch the last word,—"Maxime, how can you be so silly?" she cried, but Maxime protested, showing his paper with the declaration of war between Austria and Servia.

"War with whom?"— "With Servia?"— "Is that all?" said the good woman, as if it were a question of something in the moon.

Maxime however persisted,—*doctus cum libro,*—arguing that from one thing to another, this shock no matter how distant, might bring about a general explosion; but Clerambault, who was beginning to come out of his pleasant trance, smiled calmly, and said that nothing would happen.

"It is only a bluff," he declared, "like so many we have had for the last thirty years; we get them regularly every spring and summer; just bullying and sabre-rattling."

People did not believe in war, no one wanted it; war had been proved to be impossible,—it was a bugbear that must be got out of the heads of free democracies . . . and he enlarged on this theme. The night was calm and sweet; all around familiar sounds and sights; the chirp of crickets in the fields, a glow-worm shining in the grass,—delicious perfume of honey-suckle. Far away the noise of a distant train; the little fountain tinkled, and in the moonless sky revolved the luminous track of the light on the Eiffel Tower.

The two women went into the house, and Maxime, tired of sitting down, ran about the garden with his little dog, while through the open windows floated out an air of Schumann's, which Rosine, full of timid emotion, was playing on the piano. Clerambault left alone, threw himself back in his wicker chair, glad to be a man, to be alive, breathing in the balm of this summer night with a thankful heart.

SIX days later . . . Clerambault had spent the afternoon in the woods, and like the monk in the legend, lying under an oak tree, drinking in the song of a lark, a hundred years might have gone by him like a day. He could not tear himself away till night-fall. Maxime met him in the vestibule; he came forward smiling but rather pale, and said: "Well, Papa, we are in for it this time!" and he told him the news. The Russian mobilisation, the state of war in Germany;—Clerambault stared at him unable to comprehend, his thoughts were so far removed from these dark follies. He tried to dispute the facts, but the news was explicit, and so they went to the table, where Clerambault could eat but little.

He sought for reasons why these two crimes should lead to nothing. Common-sense, public opinion, the prudence of governments, the repeated assurances of the socialists, Jaurès' firm stand;—Maxime let him talk, he was thinking of other things,—like his dog with his ears pricked up for the sounds of the night. . . . Such a pure lovely night! Those who recall the last evenings of July, 1914, and the even more beautiful evening of the first day of August, must keep in their minds the wonderful splendour of Nature, as with a smile of pity she stretched out her arms to the degraded, self-devouring human race.

It was nearly ten o'clock when Clerambault ceased to talk, for no one had answered him. They sat then in silence with heavy hearts, listlessly occupied or seeming to be, the women with their work, Clerambault with his eyes, but not his mind, on a book. Maxime went out on the porch and smoked, leaning on the railing and looking down on

the sleeping garden and the fairy-like play of the light and shadows on the path.

The telephone bell made them start. Someone was calling Clerambault, who went slowly to answer, half-asleep and absent so that at first he did not understand; "Hullo! is that you, old man?" as he recognised the voice of a brother-author in Paris, telephoning him from a newspaper office. Still he could not seem to understand; "I don't hear,—Jaurès? What about Jaurès? . . . Oh, my God!" Maxime full of a secret apprehension had listened from a distance; he ran and caught the receiver from his father's hand, as Clerambault let it drop with a despairing gesture. "Hullo, Hullo! What do you say? Jaurès assassinated! . . ." As exclamations of pain and anger crossed each other on the wire, Maxime made out the details, which he repeated to his family in a trembling voice. Rosine had led Clerambault back to the table, where he sat down completely crushed. Like the classic Fate, the shadow of a terrible misfortune settled over the house. It was not only the loss of his friend that chilled his heart,—the kind gay face, the cordial hand, the voice which drove away the clouds,—but the loss of the last hope of the threatened people. With a touching, child-like confidence he felt Jaurès to be the only man who could avert the gathering storm, and he fallen, like Atlas, the sky would crumble.

Maxime rushed off to the station to get the news in Paris, promising to come back later in the evening, but Clerambault stayed in the isolated house, from which in the distance could be seen the far-off phosphorescence of the city. He had not stirred from the seat where he had fallen stupified. This time he could no longer doubt, the catastrophe was coming, was upon them already. Madame Clerambault begged him to go to bed, but he would not listen to her. His thought was in ruins; he could distinguish nothing steady or constant, could not see any order, or follow an

idea, for the walls of his inward dwelling had fallen in, and through the dust which rose, it was impossible to see what remained intact. He feared there was nothing left but a mass of suffering, at which he looked with dull eyes, unconscious of his falling tears. Maxime did not come home, carried away by the excitement at Paris.

Madame Clerambault had gone to bed, but about one o'clock she came and persuaded him to come up to their room, where he lay down; but when Pauline had fallen asleep—anxiety made her sleepy—he got up and went into the next room. He groaned, unable to breathe; his pain was so close and oppressive, that he had no room to draw his breath. With the prophetic hyper-sensitiveness of the artist, who often lives in tomorrow with more intensity than in the present moment, his agonised eyes and heart foresaw all that was to be. This inevitable war between the greatest nations of the world, seemed to him the failure of civilisation, the ruin of the most sacred hopes for human brotherhood. He was filled with horror at the vision of a maddened humanity, sacrificing its most precious treasures, strength, and genius, its highest virtues, to the bestial idol of war. It was to him a moral agony, a heart-rending communion with these unhappy millions. To what end? And of what use had been all the efforts of the ages? His heart seemed gripped by the void; he felt he could no longer live if his faith in the reason of men and their mutual love was destroyed, if he was forced to acknowledge that the Credo of his life and art rested on a mistake, that a dark pessimism was the answer to the riddle of the world.

He turned his eyes away in terror, he was afraid to look it in the face, this monster who was there, whose hot breath he felt upon him. Clerambault implored,—he did not know who or what—that this might not be, that it might not be. Anything rather than this should be true! But the devouring fact stood just behind the opening door.

. . . Through the whole night he strove to close that door. . . .

At last towards morning, an animal instinct began to wake, coming from he did not know where, which turned his despair towards the secret need of finding a definite and concrete cause, to fasten the blame on a man, or a group of men, and angrily hold them responsible for the misery of the world. It was as yet but a brief apparition, the first faint sign of a strange obscure, imperious soul, ready to break forth, the soul of the multitude. . . . It began to take shape when Maxime came home, for after the night in the streets of Paris, he fairly sweated with it; his very clothes, the hairs of his head, were impregnated. Worn out, excited, he could not sit down; his only thought was to go back again. The decree of mobilisation was to come out that day, war was certain, it was necessary, beneficial; some things must be put an end to, the future of humanity was at stake, the freedom of the world was threatened. "They" had counted on Jaurès' murder to sow dissension and raise riots in the country they meant to attack, but the entire nation had risen to rally round its leaders, the sublime days of the great Revolution were re-born. . . . Clerambault did not discuss these statements, he merely asked: "Do you think so? Are you quite sure?" It was a sort of hidden appeal. He wanted Maxime to state, to redouble his assertions. The news Maxime had brought added to the chaos, raised it to a climax, but at the same time it began to direct the distracted forces of his mind towards a fixed point, as the first bark of the shepherd's dog drives the sheep together.

Clerambault had but one wish left, to rejoin the flock, rub himself against the human animals, his brothers, feel with them, act with them. . . . Though exhausted by sleeplessness, he started, in spite of his wife, to take the train for Paris with Maxime. They had to wait a long time at the

station, and also in the train, for the tracks were blocked, and the cars crowded; but in the common agitation Clerambault found calm. He questioned and listened, everybody fraternised, and not being sure yet what they thought, everyone felt that they thought alike. The same questions, the same trials menaced them, but each man was no longer alone to stand or fall, and the warmth of this contact was reassuring. Class distinctions were gone; no more workmen or gentlemen, no one looked at your clothes or your hands; they only looked at your eyes where they saw the same flame of life, wavering before the same impending death. All these people were so visibly strangers to the causes of the fatality, of this catastrophe, that their innocence led them like children to look elsewhere for the guilty. It comforted and quieted their conscience. Clerambault breathed more easily when he got to Paris. A stoical and virile melancholy had succeeded to the agony of the night. He was however only at the first stage.

THE order for general mobilisation had just been affixed to the doors of the *Mairies*. People read and re-read them in silence, then went away without a word. After the anxious waiting of the preceding days, with crowds around the newspaper booths, people sitting on the sidewalk watching for the news, and when the paper was issued gathering in groups to read it, this was certainty. It was also a relief. An obscure danger, that one feels approaching without knowing when or from where, makes you feverish, but when it is there you can take breath, look it in the face, and roll up your sleeves. There had been some hours of deep thought while Paris made ready and doubled up her fists. Then that which swelled in all hearts spread itself abroad, the houses were emptied and there rolled through the streets a human flood of which every drop sought to melt into another.

Clerambault fell into the midst and was swallowed up. All at once. He had scarcely left the station, or set his foot on the pavement. Nothing happened; there were no words or gestures, but the serene exaltation of the flood flowed into him. The people were as yet pure from violence; they knew and believed themselves innocent, and in these first hours when the war was virgin, millions of hearts burned with a solemn and sacred enthusiasm. Into this proud, calm intoxication there entered a feeling of the injustice done to them, a legitimate pride in their strength, in the sacrifices that they were ready to make, and pity for others, now parts of themselves, their brothers, their children, their loved ones. All were flesh of their flesh, closely drawn together in a superhuman embrace, conscious of the gigantic body formed by their union, and of the apparition above their heads of

the phantom which incarnated this union, the Country. Half-beast, half-god, like the Egyptian Sphinx, or the Assyrian Bull; but then men saw only the shining eyes, the feet were hid. She was the divine monster in whom each of the living found himself multiplied, the devouring Immortality where those about to die wished to believe they would find life, super-life, crowned with glory. Her invisible presence flowed through the air like wine; each man brought something to the vintage, his basket, his bunch of grapes;—his ideas, passions, devotions, interests. There was many a nasty worm among the grapes, much filth under the trampling feet, but the wine was of rubies and set the heart aflame;—Clerambault gulped it down greedily.

Nevertheless he was not entirely metamorphosed, for his soul was not altered, it was only forgotten; as soon as he was alone he could hear it moaning, and for this reason he avoided solitude. He persisted in not returning to St. Prix, where the family usually stayed in summer, and re-installed himself in his apartment at Paris, on the fifth floor in the Rue d'Assas. He would not wait a week, or go back to help in the moving. He craved the friendly warmth that rose up from Paris, and poured in at his windows; any excuse was enough to plunge into it, to go down into the streets, join the groups, follow the processions, buy all the newspapers,—which he despised as a rule. He would come back more and more demoralised, anaesthetised as to what passed within him, the habit of his conscience broken, a stranger in his house, in himself;—and that is why he felt more at home out of doors than in.

MADAME CLERAMBAULT came back to Paris with her daughter, and the first evening after their arrival Clerambault carried Rosine off to the Boulevards. The solemn fervour of the first days had passed. War had begun, and truth was imprisoned. The press, the arch-liar, poured into the open mouth of the world the poisonous liquor of its stories of victories without retribution; Paris was decked as for a holiday; the houses streamed with the tricolour from top to bottom, and in the poorer quarters each garret window had its little penny flag, like a flower in the hair.

On the corner of the Faubourg Montmartre they met a strange procession. At the head marched a tall old man carrying a flag. He walked with long strides, free and supple as if he were going to leap or dance, and the skirts of his overcoat flapped in the wind. Behind came an indistinct, compact, howling mass, gentle and simple, arm in arm,—a child carried on a shoulder, a girl's red mop of hair between a chauffeur's cap and the helmet of a soldier. Chests out, chins raised, mouths open like black holes, shouting the Marseillaise. To right and left of the ranks, a double line of jail-bird faces, along the curbstone, ready to insult any absent-minded passer-by who failed to salute the colours. Rosine was startled to see her father fall into step at the end of the line, bare-headed, singing and talking aloud. He drew his daughter along by the arm, without noticing the nervous fingers that tried to hold him back.

When they came in Clerambault was still talkative and excited. He kept on for hours, while the two women listened to him patiently. Madame Clerambault heard little as usual, and played chorus. Rosine did not say a word, but

she stealthily threw a glance at her father, and her look was like freezing water.

Clerambault was exciting himself; he was not yet at the bottom, but he was conscientiously trying to reach it. Nevertheless there remained to him enough lucidity to alarm him at his own progress. An artist yields more through his sensibility to waves of emotion which reach him from without, but to resist them he has also weapons which others have not. For the least reflective, he who abandons himself to his lyrical impulses, has in some degree the faculty of introspection which it rests with him to utilise. If he does not do this, he lacks good-will more than power; he is afraid to look too clearly at himself for fear of seeing an unflattering picture. Those however who, like Clerambault, have the virtue of sincerity without psychological gifts, are sufficiently well-equipped to exercise some control over their excitability.

One day as he was walking alone, he saw a crowd on the other side of the street, he crossed over calmly and found himself on the opposite sidewalk in the midst of a confused agitation circling about an invisible point. With some difficulty he worked his way forward, and scarcely was he within this human mill-wheel, than he felt himself a part of the rim, his brain seemed turning round. At the centre of the wheel he saw a struggling man, and even before he grasped the reason for the popular fury, he felt that he shared it. He did not know if a spy was in question, or if it was some imprudent speaker who had braved the passions of the mob, but as cries rose around him, he realised that he, yes he, Clerambault, had shrieked out: . . . "Kill him." . . .

A movement of the crowd threw him out from the sidewalk, a carriage separated him from it, and when the way was clear the mob surged on after its prey. Clerambault followed it with his eyes; the sound of his own voice was still in his ears,—he did not feel proud of himself. . . .

From that day on he went out less; he distrusted himself, but he continued to stimulate his intoxication at home, where he felt himself safe, little knowing the virulence of the plague. The infection came in through the cracks of the doors, at the windows, on the printed page, in every contact. The most sensitive breathe it in on first entering the city, before they have seen or read anything; with others a passing touch is enough, the disease will develop afterwards alone. Clerambault, withdrawn from the crowd, had caught the contagion from it, and the evil announced itself by the usual premonitory symptoms. This affectionate tender-hearted man hated, loved to hate. His intelligence, which had always been thoroughly straightforward, tried now to trick itself secretly, to justify its instincts of hatred by inverted reasoning. He learned to be passionately unjust and false, for he wanted to persuade himself that he could accept the fact of war, and participate in it, without renouncing his pacifism of yesterday, his humanitarianism of the day before, and his constant optimism. It was not plain sailing, but there is nothing that the brain cannot attain to. When its master thinks it absolutely necessary to get rid for a time of principles which are in his way, it finds in these same principles the exception which violates them while confirming the rule. Clerambault began to construct a thesis, an ideal—absurd enough—in which these contradictions could be reconciled: War against War, War for Peace, for eternal Peace.

The enthusiasm of his son was a great help to him. Maxime had enlisted. His generation was carried away on a wave of heroic joy; they had waited so long—they had not dared to expect an opportunity for action and sacrifice.

Older men who had never tried to understand them, stood amazed; they remembered their own commonplace, bungling youth, full of petty egotisms, small ambitions, and mean pleasures. As they could not recognise themselves in their children they attributed to the war this flowering of virtues which had been growing up for twenty years around their indifference and which the war was about to reap. Even near a father as large-minded as Clerambault, Maxime was blighted. Clerambault was interested in spreading his own overflowing diffuse nature, too much so to see clearly and aid those whom he loved: he brought to them the warm shadow of his thought, but he stood between them and the sun.

These young people sought employment for their strength which really embarrassed them, but they did not find it in the ideals of the noblest among their elders; the humanitarianism of a Clerambault was too vague, it contented itself with pleasant hopes, without risk or vigour, which the quietude of a generation grown old in the talkative peace of Parliaments and Academies, alone could have permitted. Except as an oratorical exercise it had never tried to foresee the perils of the future, still less had it thought to determine its attitude in the day when the danger should be near. It had not the strength to make a choice between widely differing courses of action. One might be a patriot as well as an internationalist or build in imagination peace palaces or super-dreadnoughts, for one longed to know, to

embrace, and to love everything. This languid Whitmanism might have its aesthetic value, but its practical incoherence offered no guide to young people when they found themselves at the parting of the ways. They pawed the ground trembling with impatience at all this uncertainty and the uselessness of their time as it went by.

They welcomed the war, for it put an end to all this indecision, it chose for them, and they made haste to follow it. "We go to our death,—so be it; but to go is life." The battalions went off singing, thrilling with impatience, dahlias in their hats, the muskets adorned with flowers. Discharged soldiers re-enlisted; boys put their names down, their mothers urging them to it; you would have thought they were setting out for the Olympian games.

It was the same with the young men on the other side of the Rhine, and there as here, they were escorted by their gods: Country, Justice, Right, Liberty, Progress of the World, Eden-like dreams of re-born humanity, a whole phantasmagoria of mystic ideas in which young men shrouded their passions. None doubted that his cause was the right one, they left discussion to others, themselves the living proof, for he who gives his life needs no further argument.

The older men however who stayed behind, had not their reasons for ceasing to reason. Their brains were given to them to be used, not for truth, but for victory. Since in the wars of today, in which entire peoples are engulfed, thoughts as well as guns are enrolled. They slay the soul, they reach beyond the seas, and destroy after centuries have passed. Thought is the heavy artillery which works from a distance. Naturally Clerambault aimed his pieces, also the question for him was no longer to see clearly, largely, to take in the horizon, but to sight the enemy,—it gave him the illusion that he was helping his son.

With an unconscious and feverish bad faith kept up by his affection, he sought in everything that he saw, heard, or read, for arguments to prop up his will to believe in the holiness of the cause, for everything which went to prove that the enemy alone had wanted war, was the sole enemy of peace, and that to make war on the enemy was really to wish for peace.

There was proof enough and to spare; there always is; all that is needed is to know when to open and shut your eyes. . . . But nevertheless Clerambault was not entirely satisfied. These half-truths, or truths with false tails to them, produced a secret uneasiness in the conscience of this honest man, showing itself in a passionate irritation against the enemy, which grew more and more. On the same lines—like two buckets in a well, one going up as the other goes down—his patriotic enthusiasm grew and drowned the last torments of his mind in a salutary intoxication.

From now on he was on the watch for the smallest newspaper items in support of his theory; and though he knew what to think of the veracity of these sheets, he did not doubt them for an instant when their assertions fed his eager restless passion. Where the enemy was concerned he adopted the principle, that the worst is sure to be true—and he was almost grateful to Germany when, by acts of cruelty and repeated violations of justice, she furnished him the solid confirmation of the sentence which, for greater security, he had pronounced in advance.

Germany gave him full measure. Never did a country at war seem more anxious to raise the universal conscience against her. This apoplectic nation bursting with strength, threw itself upon its adversary in a delirium of pride, anger and fear. The human beast let loose, traced a ring of systematic horror around him from the first. All his instinctive and acquired brutalities were cleverly excited by those who held him in leash, by his official chiefs, his great

General Staff, his enrolled professors, his army chaplains. War has always been, will forever remain, a crime; but Germany organised it as she did everything. She made a code for murder and conflagration, and over it all she poured the boiling oil of an enraged mysticism, made up of Bismarck, of Nietzsche, and of the Bible. In order to crush the world and regenerate it, the Super-Man and Christ were mobilised. The regeneration began in Belgium—a thousand years from now men will tell of it. The affrighted world looked on at the infernal spectacle of the ancient civilisation of Europe, more than two thousand years old, crumbling under the savage expert blows of the great nation which formed its advance guard. Germany, rich in intelligence, in science and in power, in a fortnight of war became docile and degraded; but what the organisers of this Germanic frenzy failed to foresee was that, like army cholera, it would spread to the other camp, and once installed in the hostile countries it could not be dislodged until it had infected the whole of Europe, and rendered it uninhabitable for centuries. In all the madness of this atrocious war, in all its violence, Germany set the example. Her big body, better fed, more fleshly than others, offered a greater target to the attacks of the epidemic. It was terrible; but by the time the evil began to abate with her, it had penetrated elsewhere and under the form of a slow tenacious disease it ate to the very bone. To the insanities of German thinkers, speakers in Paris and everywhere were not slow to respond with their extravagances; they were like the heroes in Homer; but if they did not fight, they screamed all the louder. They insulted not only the adversary, they insulted his father, his grandfather, and his entire race; better still they denied his past. The tiniest academician worked furiously to diminish the glory of the great men asleep in the peace of the grave.

Clerambault listened and listened, absorbed, though he

was one of the few French poets who before the war had European relations and whose work would have been appreciated in Germany. He spoke no foreign language, it is true; petted old child of France that he was, who would not take the trouble to visit other people, sure that they would come to him. But at least he welcomed them kindly, his mind was free from national prejudices, and the intuitions of his heart made up for his lack of instruction and caused him to pour out without stint his admiration for foreign genius. But now that he had been warned to distrust everything, by the constant: "Keep still,—take care," and knew that Kant led straight to Krupp, he dared admire nothing without official sanction. The sympathetic modesty that caused him in times of peace to accept with the respect due to words of Holy Writ the publications of learned and distinguished men, now in the war took on the proportions of a fabulous credulity. He swallowed without a gulp the strange discoveries made at this time by the intellectuals of his country, treading under foot the art, the intelligence, the science of the enemy throughout the centuries; an effort frantically disingenuous, which denied all genius to our adversary, and either found in its highest claims to glory the mark of its present infamy or rejected its achievements altogether and bestowed them on another race.

Clerambault was overwhelmed, beside himself, but (though he did not admit it), in his heart he was glad.

SEEKING for someone to share in his excitement and keep it up by fresh arguments, he went to his friend Perrotin.

Hippolyte Perrotin was of one of those types, formerly the pride of the higher instruction in France but seldom met with in these days—a great humanist. Led by a wide and sagacious curiosity, he walked calmly through the garden of the centuries, botanising as he went. The spectacle of the present was the object least worthy of his attention, but he was too keen an observer to miss any of it, and knew how to draw it gently back into scale to fit into the whole picture. Events which others regarded as most important were not so in his eyes, and political agitations appeared to him like bugs on a rose-bush which he would carefully study with its parasites. This was to him a constant source of delight. He had the finest appreciation of shades of literary beauty, and his learning rather increased than impaired the faculty, giving to his thought an infinite range of highly-flavoured experiences to taste and compare. He belonged to the great French tradition of learned men, master writers from Buffon to Renan and Gaston Pâris. Member of the Academy and of several Classes, his extended knowledge gave him a superiority, not only of pure and classic taste, but of a liberal modern spirit, over his colleagues, genuine men of letters. He did not think himself exempt from study, as most of them did, as soon as they had passed the threshold of the sacred Cupola; old profesor as he was, he still went to school. When Clerambault was still unknown to the rest of the Immortals, except to one or two brother poets who mentioned him as little as possible with a disdainful smile, Perrotin had already dis-

covered and placed him in his collection, struck by certain pictures, an original phraseology, the mechanism of his imagination, primitive yet complicated by simplicity. All this attracted him, and then the man interested him too. He sent a short complimentary note to Clerambault who came to thank him, overflowing with gratitude, and ties of friendship were formed between the two men. They had few points of resemblance; Clerambault had lyrical gifts and ordinary intelligence dominated by his feelings, and Perrotin was gifted with a most lucid mind, never hampered by flights of the imagination. What they had in common were dignity of life, intellectual probity, and a disinterested love of art and learning, for its own sake, and not for success. None the less as may be seen, this had not prevented Perrotin from getting on in the world; honours and places had sought him, not he them; but he did not reject them; he neglected nothing.

Clerambault found him busy unwinding the wrappings with which the readers of centuries had covered over the original thought of a Chinese philosopher. At this game which was habitual with him, he came naturally to the discovery of the contrary of what appeared at first to be the meaning; passing from hand to hand the idol had become black.

Perrotin received Clerambault in this vein, polite, but a trifle absent-minded. Even when he listened to society gossip he was inwardly critical, tickling his sense of humour at its expense.

Clerambault spread his new acquisitions before him, starting from the recognised unworthiness of the enemy-nation as from a certain, well-known fact: the whole question being to decide if one should see in this the irremediable decadence of a great people, or the proof, pure and simple, of a barbarism which had always existed, but hidden from sight. Clerambault inclined to the latter explanation, and full of his recent information he held Luther,

Kant and Wagner responsible for the violation of Belgian neutrality, and the crimes of the German army. He, however, to use a colloquial expression, had never been to see for himself, being neither musician, theologian, or metaphysician. He trusted to the word of Academicians, and only made exceptions in favour of Beethoven, who was Flemish, and Goethe, citizen of a free city and almost a Strassburger, which is half French,—or French and a half. He paused for approbation.

He was surprised not to find in Perrotin an ardour corresponding to his own. His friend smiled, listened, contemplated Clerambault with an attentive and benevolent curiosity. He did not say no, but he did not say yes, either, and to some assertions he made prudent reservations. When Clerambault, much moved, quoted statements signed by two or three of Perrotin's illustrious colleagues, the latter made a slight gesture as much as to say: "Ah, you don't say so!"

Clerambault grew hotter and hotter, and Perrotin then changed his attitude, showing a keen interest in the judicious remarks of his good friend, nodding his head at every word, answering direct questions by vague phrases, assenting amiably as one does to someone whom one cannot contradict.

Clerambault went away out of countenance and discontented, but a few days later he was reassured as to his friend, when he read Perrotin's name on a violent protestation of the Academies against the barbarians. He wrote to congratulate him, and Perrotin thanked him in a few prudent and sibylline words:

"DEAR SIR,"—he affected in writing the studied, ceremonious formulas of *Monsieur de Port-Royal*—"I am ready to obey any suggestions of my country, for me they are commands. My conscience is at her service, according to the duty of every good citizen."

ONE of the most curious effects of the war on the mind, was that it aroused new affinities between individuals. People who up to this time had not a thought in common discovered all at once that they thought alike; and this resemblance drew them together. It was what people called "the Sacred Union." Men of all parties and temperaments, the choleric, the phlegmatic, monarchists, anarchists, clericals, Calvinists, suddenly forgot their everyday selves, their passions, their fads and their antipathies,—shed their skins. And there before you were now creatures, grouped in an unforeseen manner, like metal filings round an invisible magnet. All the old categories had momentarily disappeared, and no one was astonished to find himself closer to the stranger of yesterday than to a friend of many years' standing. It seemed as if, underground, souls met by secret roots that stretched through the night of instinct, that unknown region, where observation rarely ventures. For our psychology stops at that part of self which emerges from the soil, noting minutely individual differences, but forgetting that this is only the top of the plant, that nine-tenths are buried, the feet held by those of other plants. This profound, or lower, region of the soul is ordinarily below the threshold of consciousness, the mind feels nothing of it; but the war, by waking up this underground life, revealed moral relationships which no one had suspected. A sudden intimacy showed itself between Clerambault and a brother of his wife whom he had looked upon until now, and with good reason, as the type of a perfect Philistine.

Leo Camus was not quite fifty years old. He was tall, thin, and stooped a little; his skin was grey, his beard black, not much hair on his head,—you could see the bald

spots under his hat behind,—little wrinkles everywhere, cutting into each other, crossing, like a badly-made net; add to this a frowning, sulky expression, and a perpetual cold in the head. For thirty years he had been employed by the State, and his life had passed in the shadow of a court-yard at the Department. In the course of years he had changed rooms, but not shadows; he was promoted, but always in the court-yard, never would he leave it in this life. He was now Under-Secretary, which enabled him to throw a shadow in his turn. The public and he had few points of contact, and he only communicated with the outside world across a rampart of pasteboard boxes and piles of documents. He was an old bachelor without friends, and he held the misanthropical opinion that disinterested friendship did not exist upon earth. He felt no affection except for his sister's family, and the only way that he showed that was by finding fault with everything that they did. He was one of those people whose uneasy solicitude causes them to blame those they love when they are ill, and obstinately prove to them that they suffer by their own fault.

At the Clerambaults no one minded him very much. Madame Clerambault was so easy-going that she rather liked being pushed about in this way, and as for the children, they knew that these scoldings were sweetened by little presents; so they pocketed the presents and let the rest go by.

The conduct of Leo Camus towards his brother-in-law had varied with time. When his sister had married Clerambault, Camus had not hesitated to find fault with the match; an unknown poet did not seem to him "serious" enough. Poetry—unknown poetry—is a pretext for not working; when one is "known," of course that is quite another thing; Camus held Hugo in high esteem, and could even recite verses from the "Châtiments," or from Auguste

Barbier. They were "known," you see, and that made all the difference. . . . Just at this time Clerambault himself became "known," Camus read about him one day in his favourite paper, and after that he consented to read Clerambault's poems. He did not understand them, but he bore them no ill will on that account. He liked to call himself old-fashioned, it made him feel superior, and there are many in the world like him, who pride themselves on their lack of comprehension. For we must all plume ourselves as we can; some of us on what we have, others on what we have not.

Camus was willing to admit that Clerambault could write. He knew something of the art himself,—and his respect for his brother-in-law increased in proportion to the "puffs" he read in the papers, and he liked to chat with him. He had always appreciated his affectionate kind-heartedness, though he never said so, and what pleased also in this great poet, for great he was now, was his manifest incapacity, and practical ignorance of business matters; on this ground Camus was his superior, and did not hesitate to show it. Clerambault had a simple-hearted confidence in his fellow-man, and nothing could have been better suited to Camus' aggressive pessimism, which it kept in working order. The greater part of his visits was spent in reducing Clerambault's illusions to fragments, but they had as many lives as a cat, and every time he came it had to be done over again. This irritated Camus, but secretly pleased him for he needed a pretext constantly renewed to think the world bad, and men a set of imbeciles. Above all he had no mercy on politicians; this Government employee hated Governments, though he would have been puzzled to say what he would put in their places. The only form of politics that he understood was opposition. He suffered from a spoiled life and thwarted nature. He was a peasant's son and born to raise grapes, or else to exercise

his authoritative instincts over the field labourers, like a watch-dog. Unfortunately, diseases of the vines interfered and also the pride of a quill-driver; the family moved to town, and now he would have felt it a derogation to return to his real nature, which was too much atrophied, even if he had wished it. Not having found his true place in society, he blamed the social order, serving it, as do millions of functionaries, like a bad servant, an underhand enemy.

A mind of this sort, peevish, bitter, misanthropical, it seems would have been driven crazy by the war, but on the contrary it served to tranquilise it. When the herd draws itself together in arms against the stranger it is a fall for those rare free spirits who love the whole world, but it raises the many who weakly vegetate in anarchistic egotism, and lifts them to that higher stage of organised selfishness. Camus woke up all at once, with the feeling that for the first time he was not alone in the world.

Patriotism is perhaps the only instinct under present conditions which escapes the withering touch of every-day life. All other instincts and natural aspirations, the legitimate need to love and act in social life, are stifled, mutilated and forced to pass under the yoke of denial and compromise. When a man reaches middle life and turns to look back, he sees these desires marked with his failures and his cowardice; the taste is bitter on his tongue, he is ashamed of them and of himself. Patriotism alone has remained outside, unemployed but not tarnished, and when it re-awakes it is inviolate. The soul embraces and lavishes on it the ardour of all the ambitions, the loves, and the longings, that life has disappointed. A half century of suppressed fire bursts forth, millions of little cages in the social prison open their doors. At last! Long enchained instincts stretch their stiffened limbs, cry out and leap into the open air, as of right—right, do I say? it is now their duty to press

forward all together like a falling mass. The isolated snow-flakes turned avalanche.

Camus was carried away, the little bureaucrat found himself part of it all and without fury or futile violence he felt only a calm strength. All was "well" with him, well in mind, well in body. He had no more insomnia, and for the first time in years his stomach gave him no trouble—because he had forgotten all about it. He even got through the winter without taking cold—something that had never been heard of before. He ceased to find fault with everything and everybody, he no longer railed at all that was done or undone, for now he was filled with a sacred pity for the entire social body—that body, now his, but stronger, better, and more beautiful. He felt a fraternal bond with all those who formed part of it by their close union, like a swarm of bees hanging from a branch, and envied the younger men who went to defend it. When Maxime gaily prepared to go, his uncle gazed at him tenderly, and when the train left carrying away the young men, he turned and threw his arms round Clerambault, then shook hands with unknown parents who had come to see their sons off, with tears of emotion and joy in his eyes. In that moment Camus was ready to give up everything he possessed. It was his honey-moon with Life—this solitary starved soul saw her as she passed and seized her in his arms. . . . Yes, Life passes, the euphoria of a Camus cannot last forever, but he who has known it lives only in the memory of it, and in the hope that it may return. War brought this gift, therefore Peace is an enemy, and enemies are all those who desire it.

Clerambault and Camus exchanged ideas, and to such an extent that finally Clerambault could not tell which were his own, and as he lost footing he felt more strongly the need to act; for action was a kind of justification to himself. . . . Whom did he wish to justify? Alas, it was Camus! In spite of his habitual ardour and convictions he was a mere echo—and of what unhappy voices.

He began to write Hymns to Battle. There was great competition in this line among poets who did not fight themselves. But there was little danger that their productions would clog men's memories in future ages, for nothing in their previous career had prepared these unfortunates for such a task. In vain they raised their voices and exhausted all the resources of French rhetoric, the "poilus" only shrugged their shoulders.

However people in the rear liked them much better than the stories written in the dark and covered with mud, that came out of the trenches. The visions of a Barbusse had not yet dawned to show the truth to these talkative shadows. There was no difficulty for Clerambault, he shone in these eloquent contests. For he had the fatal gift of verbal and rhythmical facility which separates poets from reality, wrapping them as if in a spider's web. In times of peace this harmless web hung on the bushes, the wind blowing through it, and the good-natured Arachne caught nothing but light in her meshes. Nowadays, however, the poets cultivated their carniverous instincts—fortunately rather out of date—and hidden at the bottom of their web one could catch sight of a nasty little beast with an eye fixed on the prey. They sang of hatred and holy butchery, and Clerambault did as they did, even

better, for he had more voice. And, by dint of screaming, this worthy man ended by feeling passions that he knew nothing of. He learned to "know" hatred at last, know in the Biblical sense, and it only roused in him that base pride that an undergraduate feels when for the first time he finds himself coming out of a brothel.

Now he was a man, and in fact he needed nothing more, he had fallen as low as the others.

Camus well deserved and enjoyed the first taste of each one of these poems and they made him neigh with enthusiasm, for he recognised himself in them. Clerambault was flattered, thinking he had touched the popular string. The brothers-in-law spent their evenings alone together. Clerambault read, Camus drank in his verses; he knew them by heart, and told everyone who would listen to him that Hugo had come to life again, and that each of these poems was worth a victory. His noisy admiration made it unnecessary for the other members of the family to express their opinion. Under some excuse, Rosine regularly made a practice of leaving the room when the reading was over. Clerambault felt it, and would have liked to ask his daughter's opinion, but found it more prudent not to put the question. He preferred to persuade himself that Rosine's emotion and timidity put her to flight. He was vexed all the same, but the approval of the outside world healed this slight wound. His poems appeared in the *bourgeois* papers, and proved the most striking success of Clerambault's career, for no other work of his had raised such unanimous admiration. A poet is always pleased to have it said that his last work is his best, all the more when he knows that it is inferior to the others.

Clerambault knew it perfectly well, but he swallowed all the fawning reviews of the press with infantile vanity. In the evening he made Camus read them aloud in the family

circle, beaming with joy as he listened. When it was over he nearly shouted:

"Encore!"

In this concert of praise one slightly flat note came from Perrotin. (Undoubtedly he had been much deceived in him, he was not a true friend.) The old scholar to whom Clerambault had sent a copy of his poems did not fail to congratulate him politely, praising his great talent, but he did not say that this was his finest work; he even urged him, "after having offered his tribute to the warlike Muse, to produce now a work of pure imagination detached from the present." What could he mean? When an artist submits his work for your approval, is it proper to say to him: "I should prefer to read another one quite different from this?" This was a fresh sign to Clerambault of the sadly lukewarm patriotism that he had already noticed in Perrotin. This lack of comprehension chilled his feeling towards his old friend. The war, he thought, was the great test of characters, it revised all values, and tried out friendships. And he thought that the loss of Perrotin was balanced by the gain of Camus, and many new friends, plain people, no doubt, but simple and warm-hearted.

Sometimes at night he had moments of oppression, he was uneasy, wakeful, discontented, ashamed; . . . but of what? Had he not done his duty?

THE first letters from Maxime were a comforting cordial; the first drops dissipated every discouragement, and they all lived on them in long intervals when no news came. In spite of the agony of these silences, when any second might be fatal to the loved one, his perfect confidence (exaggerated perhaps, through affection, or superstition) communicated itself to them all. His letters were running over with youth and exuberant joy, which reached its climax in the days that followed the victory of the Marne. The whole family yearned towards him as one; like a plant the summit of which bathes in the light, stretching up to it in a rapture of mystic adoration.

People who but yesterday were soft and torpid, expanded under the extraordinary light when fate threw them into the infernal vortex of the war, the light of Death, the game with Death; Maxime, a spoiled child, delicate, over-particular, who in ordinary times took care of himself like a fine lady, found an unexpected flavour in the privations and trials of his new life, and wondering at himself he boasted of it in his charming, vainglorious letters which delighted the hearts of his parents.

Neither affected to be cast in the mould of one of Corneille's heroes, and the thought of immolating their child on the altar of a barbaric idea would have filled them with horror; but the transfiguration of their petted boy suddenly become a hero, touched them with a tenderness never before felt. In spite of their anxiety, Maxime's enthusiasm intoxicated them, and it made them ungrateful toward their former life, that peaceful affectionate existence, with its long monotonous days. Maxime was amusingly con-

temptuous of it, calling it absurd after one had seen what was going on " out there."

" Out there " one was glad to sleep three hours on the hard ground, or once in a month of Sundays on a wisp of straw, glad to turn out at three o'clock in the morning and warm up by marching thirty kilometres with a knapsack on one's back, sweating freely for eight or ten hours at a time. . . . Glad above all to get in touch with the enemy, and rest a little lying down under a bank, while one peppered the boches. . . . This young Cyrano declared that fighting rested you after a march, and when he described an engagement you would have said that he was at a concert or a " movie."

The rhythm of the shells, the noise when they left the gun and when they burst, reminded him of the passage with cymbals in the divine scherzo of the Ninth Symphony. When he heard overhead as from an airy music-box the buzzing of these steel mosquitoes, mischievous, imperious, angry, treacherous, or simply full of amiable carelessness, he felt like a street boy rushing out to see a fire. No more fatigue; mind and body on the alert; and when came the long-awaited order " Forward! " one jumped to one's feet, light as a feather, and ran to the nearest shelter under the hail of bullets, glad to be in the open, like a hound on the scent. You crawled on your hands and knees, or on your stomach, you ran all bent doubled-up, or did Swedish gymnastics through the underbrush . . . that made up for not being able to walk straight; and when it grew dark you said: " What, night already?—What have we been doing with ourselves, today? " . . . " In conclusion," said this little French cockerel, " the only tiresome thing in war is what you do in peace-time,—you walk along the high road."

This was the way these young men talked in the first month of the campaign, all soldiers of the Marne, of war

in the open. If this had gone on, we should have seen once more the race of barefooted Revolutionaries, who set out to conquer the world and could not stop themselves.

They were at last forced to stop, and from the moment that they were put to soak in the trenches, the tone changed. Maxime lost his spirit, his boyish carelessness. From day to day he grew virile, stoical, obstinate and nervous. He still vouched for the final victory, but ceased after a while to talk of it, and wrote only of duty to be done, then even that stopped, and his letters became dull, grey, tired-out.

Enthusiasm had not diminished behind the lines, and Clerambault persisted in vibrating like an organ pipe, but Maxime no longer gave back the echo he sought to evoke.

All at once, without warning, Maxime came home for a week's leave. He stopped on the stairs, for though he seemed more robust than formerly, his legs felt heavy, and he was soon tired. He waited a moment to breathe, for he was moved, and then went up. His mother came to the door at his ring, screaming at the sight of him. Clerambault who was pacing up and down the apartment in the weariness of the long waiting, cried out too as he ran. It was a tremendous row.

After a few minutes there was a truce to embraces and inarticulate exclamations. Pushed into a chair by the window with his face to the light, Maxime gave himself up to their delighted eyes. They were in ecstasies over his complexion, his cheeks more filled out, his healthy look. His father threw his arms around him calling him " My Hero " —but Maxime sat with his fingers twitching nervously, and could not get out a word.

At table they feasted their eyes on him, hung on every word, but he said very little. The excitement of his family had checked his first impetus, but luckily they did not notice it, and attributed his silence to fatigue or to hunger. Clerambault talked enough for two; telling Maxime about life in the trenches. Good mother Pauline was transformed into a Cornelia, out of Plutarch, and Maxime looked at them, ate, looked again. . . . A gulf had opened between them.

When after dinner they all went back to his father's study, and they saw him comfortably established with a cigar, he had to try and satisfy these poor waiting people. So he quietly began to tell them how his time was passed, with a certain proud reserve and leaving out tragical

pictures. They listened in trembling expectation, and when he had finished they were still expectant. Then on their side came a shower of questions, to which Maxime's replies were short—soon he fell silent. Clerambault to wake up the "young rascal" tried several jovial thrusts.

"Come now, tell us about some of your engagements. . . . It must be fine to see such joy, such sacred fire—Lord, but I would like to see all that, I would like to be in your place."

"You can see all these fine things better from where you are," said Maxime. Since he had been in the trenches he had not seen a fight, hardly set eyes on a German, his view was bounded by mud and water—but they would not believe him, they thought he was talking "contrariwise" as he did when he was a child.

"You old humbug," said his father, laughing gaily, "What does happen then all day long in your trenches?"

"We take care of ourselves; kill time, the worst enemy of all."

Clerambault slapped him amicably on the back.

"Time is not the only one you kill?"—Maxime drew away, saw the kind, curious glances of his father and mother, and answered:

"Please talk of something else," and added after a pause:

"Will you do something for me?—don't ask me any more questions today."

They agreed rather surprised, but they supposed that he needed care, being so tired, and they overwhelmed him with attentions. Clerambault, however, could not refrain from breaking out every minute or two in apostrophes, demanding his son's approbation. His speeches resounded with the word "Liberty." Maxime smiled faintly and looked at Rosine, for the attitude of the young girl was singular. When her brother came in she threw her arms round his neck, but since she had kept in the background, one might

have said aloof. She had taken no part in her parents' questions, and far from inviting confidence from Maxime she seemed to shrink from it. He felt the same awkwardness, and avoided being alone with her. But still they had never felt closer to each other in spirit, they could not have borne to say why.

Maxime had to be shown to all the neighbours, and by way of amusement he was taken out for a walk. In spite of her mourning, Paris again wore a smiling face; poverty and pain were hidden at home, or at the bottom of her proud heart; but the perpetual Fair in the streets and in the press showed its mask of contentment.

The people in the cafés and the tea-rooms were ready to hold out for twenty years, if necessary. Maxime and his family sat in a tea-shop at a little table, gay chatter and the perfume of women all about him. Through it he saw the trench where he had been bombarded for twenty-six days on end, unable to stir from the sticky ditch full of corpses which rose around him like a wall. . . . His mother laid her hand on his, he woke, saw the affectionate questioning glances of his people, and self-reproached for making them uneasy, he smiled and began to look about and talk gaily. His boyish high spirits came back, and the shadow cleared away from Clerambault's face; he glanced simply and gratefully at Maxime.

His alarms were not at an end, however. As they left the tea-shop—he leaning on the arm of his son—they met a military funeral. There were wreaths and uniforms, a member of the Institute with his sword between his legs, and brass instruments braying out an heroic lamentation.

The crowd drew respectfully to either side, Clerambault stopped and pointedly took off his hat, while with his left hand he pressed Maxime's arm yet closer to his side. Feeling him tremble, he turned towards his son, and thought he had a strange look. Supposing that he was overcome

he tried to draw him away, but Maxime did not stir, he was so much taken aback.

"A dead man," he thought. All that for one dead man! . . . and out there we walk over them. Five hundred a day on the roll, that's the normal ration."

Hearing a sneering little laugh, Clerambault was frightened and pulled him by the arm.

"Come away!" he said, and they moved on.

"If they could see," said Maxime to himself, "if they could only see! . . . their whole society would go to pieces, . . . but they will always be blind, they do not want to see . . . "

His eyes, cruelly sharpened now, saw the adversary all around him,—in the carelessness of the world, its stupidity, its egotism, its luxury, in the "I don't give a damn!", the indecent profits of the war, the enjoyment of it, the falseness down to the roots. . . . All these sheltered people, shirkers, police, with their insolent autos that looked like cannon, their women booted to the knee, with scarlet mouths, and cruel little candy faces . . . they are all satisfied . . . all is for the best! . . . "It will go on forever as it is!" Half the world devouring the other half. . . .

They went home. In the evening after dinner Clerambault was dying to read his latest poem to Maxime. The idea of it was touching, if a little absurd.—In his love for his son, he sought to be in spirit, at least, the comrade of his glory and his sufferings, and he had described them, —at a distance—in "Dawn in the Trenches." Twice he got up to look for the MS., but with the sheets in his hand a sort of shyness paralysed him, and he went back without them.

As the days went by they felt themselves closely knit together by ties of the flesh, but their souls were out of touch. Neither would admit it though each knew it well.

A sadness was between them, but they refused to see the real cause, and preferred to ascribe it to the approaching separation. From time to time the father or the mother made a fresh attempt to re-open the sources of intimacy, but each time came the same disappointment. Maxime saw that he had no longer any way of communicating with them, with anyone in the rear. They lived in different worlds . . . could they ever understand each other again? . . . Yet still he understood them, for once he had himself undergone the influence which weighed on them, and had only come to his senses "out there," in contact with real suffering and death. But just because he had been touched himself, he knew the impossibility of curing the others by process of reasoning; so he let them talk, silent himself, smiling vaguely, assenting to he knew not what. The preoccupations here behind the lines filled him with disgust, weariness, and a profound pity for these people in the rear—a strange race to him, with the outcries of the papers, questions from such persons—old buffoons, worn-out, damaged politicians!—patriotic braggings, written-up strategies, anxieties about black bread, sugar cards, or the days when the confectioners were shut. He took refuge in a mysterious silence, smiling and sad; and only went out occasionally, when he thought of the short time he had to be with these dear people who loved him. Then he would begin to talk with the utmost animation about anything. The important thing was to make a noise, since one could no longer speak one's real thoughts, and naturally he fell back on everyday matters. Questions of general interest and political news came first, but they might as well have read the morning paper aloud. "The Crushing of the Huns," "The Triumph of the Right," filled Clerambault's thoughts and speeches, while he served as acolyte, and filled in the pauses with *cum spiritu tuo*. All the time each was waiting for the other to begin to talk.

They waited so long that the end of his leave came. A little while before he went, Maxime came into his father's study resolved to explain himself:

" Papa, are you quite sure? " . . .

The trouble painted on Clerambault's face checked the words on his lips. He had pity on him and asked if his father was quite sure at what time the train was to leave and Clerambault heard the end of the question with an only too visible relief. When he had supplied all the information—that Maxime did not listen to—he mounted his oratorical hobby-horse again and started out with one of his habitual idealistic declamations. Maxime held his peace, discouraged, and for the last hour they spoke only of trifles. All but the mother felt that the essential had not been uttered; only light and confident words, an apparent excitement, but a deep sigh in the heart—" My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken us? "

When Maxime left he was really glad to go back to the front. The gulf that he had found between the front and rear seemed to him deeper than the trenches, and guns did not appear to him as murderous as ideas.

As the railway carriage drew out of the station he leaned from the window and followed with his eyes the tearful faces of his family fading in the distance, and he thought:

" Poor dears, you are their victims and we are yours."

THE day after his return to the front the great spring offensive was let loose, which the talkative newspapers had announced to the enemy several weeks beforehand. The hopes of the nation had been fed on it during the gloomy winter of waiting and death, and it rose now, filled with an impatient joy, sure of victory and crying out to it—"At last!"

The first news seemed good; of course it spoke only of the enemy's losses, and all faces brightened. Parents whose sons, women whose husbands were "out there" were proud that their flesh and their love had a part in this sanguinary feast; and in their exaltation they hardly stopped to think that their dear one might be among the victims. The excitement ran so high that Clerambault, an affectionate, tender father, generally most anxious for those he loved, was actually afraid that his son had not got back in time for "The Dance." He wanted him to be there, his eager wishes pushed, thrust him into the abyss, making this sacrifice, disposing of his son and of his life, without asking if he himself agreed. He and his had ceased to belong to themselves. He could not conceive that it should be otherwise with any of them. The obscure will of the ant-heap had eaten him up.

Sometimes taken unawares, the remains of his self-analytical habit of mind would appear; like a sensitive nerve that is touched,—a dull blow, a quiver of pain, it is gone, and we forget it.

At the end of three weeks the exhausted offensive was still pawing the ground of the same blood-soaked kilometres, and the newspapers began to distract public attention, putting it on a fresh scent. Nothing had been heard from

Maxime since he left. They sought for the ordinary reasons for delay which the mind furnishes readily but the heart cannot accept. Another week went by. Among themselves each of the three pretended to be confident, but at night, each one alone in his room, the heart cried out in agony, and the whole day long the ear was strained to catch every step on the stair, the nerves stretched to the breaking point at a ring of the bell, or the touch of a hand passing the door.

The first official news of the losses began to come in; several families among Clerambault's friends already knew which of their men were dead and which wounded. Those who had lost all, envied those who could have their loved ones back, though bleeding, perhaps mutilated. Many sank into the night of their grief; for them the war and life were equally over. But with others the exaltation of the early days persisted strangely; Clerambault saw one mother wrought up by her patriotism and her grief to the point that she almost rejoiced at the death of her son. "I have given my all, my all!" she would say, with a violent, concentrated joy such as is felt in the last second before extinction by a woman who drowns herself with the man she loves. Clerambault however was weaker, and waking from his dizziness he thought:

"I too have given all, even what was not my own."

He inquired of the military authorities, but they knew nothing as yet. Ten days later came the news that Sergeant Clerambault was reported as missing from the night of the 27-28th of the preceding month. Clerambault could get no further details at the Paris bureaus; therefore he set out for Geneva, went to the Red Cross, the Agency for Prisoners,—could find nothing; followed up every clue, got permission to question comrades of his son in hospitals or depots behind the lines. They all gave contradictory information; one said he was a prisoner, another had seen

him dead, and both the next day admitted that they had been mistaken. . . . Oh! tortures! Gôd of vengeance! . . . He came back after a fortnight from this Way of the Cross, aged, broken-down, exhausted.

He found his wife in a paroxysm of frantic grief, which in this good-natured creature had turned to a furious hatred of the enemy; she cried out for revenge, and for the first time Clerambault did not answer. He had not strength enough to hate, he could only suffer.

He shut himself into his room. During that frightful ten days' pilgrimage he had scarcely looked his thoughts in the face, hypnotised as he was, day and night by one idea, like a dog on a scent,—faster! go faster! The slowness of carriages and trains consumed him, and once, when he had taken a room for the night, he rushed away the same evening, without stopping to rest. This fever of haste and expectation devoured everything, and made consecutive thought impossible,—which was his salvation. Now that the chase was ended, his mind, exhausted and dying, recovered its powers.

Clerambault knew certainly that Maxime was dead. He had not told his wife, but had concealed some information that destroyed all hope. She was one of those people who absolutely must keep a gleam of falsehood to lure them on, against all reason, until the first flood of grief is over. Perhaps Clerambault himself had been one of them, but he was not so now; for he saw where this lure had led him. He did not judge, he was not yet able to form a judgment, lying in the darkness. Too weak to rise, and feel about him, he was like someone who moves his crushed limbs after a fall, and with each stab of pain recovers consciousness of life, and tries to understand what has happened to him. The stupid gulf of this death overcame him. That this beautiful child, who had given them so much joy, cost them so much care, all this marvel of hope in flower, the price-

less little world that is a young man, a tree of Jesse, future years . . . all vanished in an hour!—and why?—why?—

He was forced to try to persuade himself at least that it was for something great and necessary. Clerambault clung despairingly to this buoy during the succeeding nights, feeling that if his hold gave way he should go under. More than ever he insisted on the holiness of the cause; he would not even discuss it; but little by little his fingers slipped, he settled lower with every movement, for each new statement of the justice of his cause roused a voice in his conscience which said:

"Even if you were twenty thousand times more right in this struggle, is your justification worth the disasters it costs? Does justice demand that millions of innocents should fall, a ransom for the sins and the errors of others? Is crime to be washed out by crime? or murder by murder? And must your sons be not only victims but accomplices, assassinated and assassins? . . ."

He looked back at the last visit of his son, and reflected on their last talks together. How many things were clear to him now, which he had not understood at the time! Maxime's silence, the reproach in his eyes. The worst of all was when he recognised that he had understood, at the time, when his son was there, but that he would not admit it.

This discovery, which had hung over him like a dark cloud for weeks,—this realisation of inward falsehood, —crushed him to the earth.

UNTIL the actual crisis was upon them, Rosine Clerambault seemed thrown into the shade. Her inward life was unknown to the others, and almost to herself; even her father had scarcely a glimpse of it. She had lived under the wing of the warm, selfish, stifling family life, and had few friends or companions of her own age, for her parents stood between her and the world outside, and she had grown up in their shadow.

As she grew older if she had wished to escape she would not have dared, would not have known how; for she was shy outside the family circle, and could hardly move or talk; people thought her insignificant. This she knew; it wounded her self-respect, and therefore she went out as little as possible, preferring to stay at home, where she was simple, natural and taciturn. This silence did not arise from slowness of thought, but from the chatter of the others. As her father, mother, and brother were all exuberant talkers, this little person by a sort of reaction, withdrew into herself, where she could talk freely.

She was fair, tall, and boyishly slender, with pretty hair, the locks always straying over her cheeks. Her mouth was rather large and serious, the lower lip full at the corners, her eyes large, calm and vague, with fine well-marked eyebrows. She had a graceful chin, a pretty throat, an undeveloped figure, no hips; her hands were large and a little red, with prominent veins. Anything would make her blush, and her girlish charm was all in the forehead and the chin. Her eyes were always asking and dreaming, but said little.

Her father's preference was for her, just as her mother was drawn towards the son by natural affinity. Without thinking much about it, Clerambault had always monopo-

lised his daughter, surrounding her from childhood with his absorbing affection. She had been partly educated by him, and with the almost offensive simplicity of the artist mind, he had taken her for the confidante of his inner life. This was brought about by his overflowing self-consciousness, and the little response that he found in his wife, a good creature, who, as the saying is, sat at his feet, in fact stayed there permanently, answering yes to all that he said, admiring him blindly, without understanding him, or feeling the lack; the essential to her was not her husband's thought but himself, his welfare, his comfort, his food, his clothing, his health. Honest Clerambault in the gratitude of his heart did not criticise his wife, any more than Rosine criticised her mother, but both of them knew how it was, instinctively, and were drawn closer by a secret tie. Clerambault was not aware that in his daughter he had found the real wife of his heart and mind. Nor did he begin to suspect it, till in these last days the war had seemed to break the tacit accord between them. Rosine's approval hitherto had bound her to him, and now all at once it failed him. She knew many things before he did, but shrank from the depths of the mystery; the mind need not give warning to the heart, it knows.

Strange, splendid mystery of love between souls, independent of social and even of natural laws. Few there be that know it, and fewer still that dare to reveal it; they are afraid of the coarse world and its summary judgments and can get no farther than the plain meaning of traditional language. In this conventional tongue, which is voluntarily inexact for the sake of social simplification, words are careful not to unveil, by expressing them, the many shades of reality in its multiple forms. They imprison it, codify it, drill it; they press it into the service of the mind already domesticated; of that reasoning power which does not spring from the depth of the spirit, but from shallow,

walled-in pools—like the basins at Versailles—within the limits of constituted society.

In this somewhat legal phraseology love is bound to sex, age, and social classes; it is either natural or unnatural, legitimate or the reverse. But this is a mere trickle of water from the deep springs of love, which is as the law of gravitation that keeps the stars in their courses, and cares nothing for the ways that we trace for it. This infinite love fulfils itself between souls far removed by time and space; across the centuries it unites the thoughts of the living and the dead; weaves close and chaste ties between old and young hearts; through it, friend is nearer to friend, the child is closer in spirit to the old man than are husband or wife in the whole course of their lives. Between fathers and children these ties often exist unconsciously, and "the world" as our forefathers used to say, counts so little in comparison with love eternal, that the positions are sometimes reversed, and the younger may not always be the most childlike. How many sons are there who feel a devout paternal affection for an old mother? And do we not often see ourselves small and humble under the eyes of a child? The look with which the Bambino of Botticelli contemplates the innocent Virgin is heavy with a sad unconscious experience, and as old as the world.

The affection of Clerambault and Rosine was of this sort; fine, religious, above the reach of reason. That is why, in the depths of the troubled sea, below the pains and the conflicts of conscience caused by the war, a secret drama went on, without signs, almost without words, between these hearts united by a sacred love. This unavowed sentiment explained the sensitiveness of their mutual reactions. At first Rosine drew away in silence, disappointed in her affection, her secret worship tarnished, by the effect of the war on her father; she stood apart from him, like a little antique statue, chastely draped. At once Clerambault became un-

easy; his sensibility sharpened by tenderness, felt instantly this *Noli me tangere,* and from this arose an unexpressed estrangement between the father and daughter. Words are so coarse, one would not dare to speak even in the purest sense of disappointed love, but this inner discord, of which neither ever spoke a word, was pain to both of them; made the young girl unhappy, and irritated Clerambault. He knew the cause well enough, but his pride refused to admit it; though little by little he was not far from confessing that Rosine was right. He was ready to humiliate himself, but his tongue was tied by false shame; and so the difference between their minds grew wider, while in their hearts each longed to yield.

In the confusion that followed Maxime's death, this inward prayer pressed more on the one less able to resist. Clerambault was prostrated by his grief, his wife aimlessly busy, and Rosine was out all day at her war work. They only came together at meals. But it happened that one evening after dinner Clerambault heard her mother violently scolding Rosine, who had spoken of wounded enemies whom she wanted to take care of. Madame Clerambault was as indignant as if her daughter had committed a crime, and appealed to her husband. His weary, vague, sad eyes had begun to see; he looked at Rosine who was silent, her head bent, waiting for his reply.

"You are right, my little girl," he said.

Rosine started and flushed, for she had not expected this; she raised her grateful eyes to his, and their look seemed to say: "You have come back to me at last."

After the brief repast they usually separated; each to eat out his heart in solitude. Clerambault sat before his writing-table and wept, his face hidden in his hands. Rosine's look had pierced through to his suffering heart; his soul lost, stifled for so long, had come to be as it was before the war. Oh, the look in her eyes! . . .

He listened, wiping away his tears; his wife had locked herself into Maxime's room as she did every evening, and was folding and unfolding his clothes, arranging the things left behind. . . . He went into the room where Rosine sat alone by the window, sewing. She was absorbed in thought, and did not hear him coming till he stood before her; till he laid his grey head on her shoulder and murmured: " My little girl."

Then her heart melted also. She took the dear old head between her hands, with its rough hair, and answered:

" My dear father."

Neither needed to ask or to explain why he was there. After a long silence, when he was calmer, he looked at her and said:

" It seems as if I had waked up from a frightful dream." . . . But she merely stroked his hair, without speaking.

" You were watching over me, were you not? . . . I saw it. . . . Were you unhappy? " . . .

She just bowed her head not daring to look at him. He stooped to kiss her hands, and raising his head he whispered:

" My good angel. You have saved me! "

When he had gone back to his room she stayed there without moving, filled with emotion, which kept her for long, still, with drooping head, her hands clasped on her knees. The waves of feeling that flowed through her almost took away her breath. Her heart was bursting with love, happiness, and shame. The humility of her father overcame her. . . . And all at once a passionate impulse of tender, filial piety broke the bonds which paralysed her soul and body, as she stretched out her arms towards the absent, and threw herself at the foot of her bed, thanking God, beseeching Him to give all the suffering to her, and happiness to the one she loved.

The God to whom she prayed did not give ear; for it was on the head of this young girl that he poured the sweet sleep of forgetfulness; but Clerambault had to climb his Calvary to the end.

Alone in his room, the lamp put out, in darkness, Clerambault looked within himself. He was determined to pierce to the bottom of his timid, lying soul which tried to hide itself. On his head he could still feel the coolness of his daughter's hand, which had effaced all his hesitation.

He would face this monster Truth, though he were torn by its claws which never relax, once they have taken hold.

With a firm hand, in spite of his anguish, he began to tear off in bleeding fragments the covering of mortal prejudices, passions, and ideas foreign to his real nature, which clung to him.

First came the thick fleece of the thousand-headed beast, the collective soul of the herd. He had hidden under it from fear and weariness. It is hot and stifling, a dirty feather-bed; but once wrapped in it, one cannot move

to throw it off, or even wish to do so; there is no need to will, or to think; one is sheltered from cold, from responsibilities. Laziness, cowardice! . . . Come, away with it! . . . Let the chilly wind blow through the rents. You shrink at first, but already this breath has shaken the torpor; the enfeebled energy begins to stagger to its feet. What will it find outside? No matter what, we must see. . . .

Sick with disgust, he saw first what he was loath to believe; how this greasy fleece had stuck to his flesh. He could sniff the musty odour of the primitive beast, the savage instincts of war, of murder, the lust for blood like living meat torn by his jaws. The elemental force which asks death for life. Far down in the depths of human nature is this slaughter-house in the ditch, never filled up but covered with the veil of a false civilisation, over which hangs a faint whiff from the butcher's shop. . . . This filthy odour finally sobered Clerambault; with horror he tore off the skin of the beast whose prey he had been.

Ah, how thick it was,—warm, silky, and beautiful, and at the same time stinking and bloody, made of the lowest instincts, and the highest illusions. To love, give ourselves to all, be a sacrifice for all, be but one body and one soul, our Country the sole life! . . . What then is this Country, this living thing to which a man sacrifices his life, the life of all but his conscience and the consciences of others? What is this blind love, of which the other side of the shield is an equally blinded hate?

. . . "It was a great error to take the name of reason from that of love," says Pascal, "and we have no good cause to think them opposed, for love and reason are in truth the same. Love is a precipitation of thought to one side without considering everything; but it is always reason." . . .

Well, let us consider everything. Is not this love in a great measure the fear of examining all things, as a child

hides his head under the sheet, so as not to see the shadow on the wall?

Country? A Hindoo temple: men, monsters, and gods. What is she? The earth we tread on? The whole earth is the mother of us all. The family? It is here and there, with the enemy as with ourselves, and it asks nothing but peace. The poor, the workers, the people, they are on both sides, equally miserable, equally exploited. Thinkers have a common field, and as for their rivalries and their vanities, they are as ridiculous in the East as in the West; the world does not go to war over the quarrels of a Vadius or a Trissotin. The State? But the State and the Country are not the same thing. The confusion is made by those who find profit in it; the State is our strength, used and abused by men like ourselves, no better than ourselves, often worse. We are not duped by them, and in times of peace we judge them fairly enough, but let a war come on, they are given *carte blanche,* they can appeal to the lowest instincts, stifle all control, suppress liberty and truth, destroy all humanity; they are masters, we must stand shoulder to shoulder to defend the honour and the mistakes of these Masacarilles arrayed in borrowed plumes. We are all answerable, do you say? Terrible net-work of words! Responsible no doubt we are for the best and the worst of our people, it is a fact as we well know, but that it is a duty that binds us to their injustices and their insanities. . . . I deny it! . . .

There can be no question as to community of interest. No one, thought Clerambault, has had more joy in it, or said more in praise of its greatness. It is good and healthy, it makes for rest and strength, to plunge the bare, stiff, cold ego into the collective mind, as into a bath of confidence and fraternal gifts. It unbends, gives itself, breathes more deeply; man needs his fellow-man, and owes himself to

him, but in order to give out, he must possess, he must be something. But how can he be, if his self is merged in others? He has many duties, but the highest of all is to be and remain himself; even when he sacrifices and gives all that he is. To bathe in the soul of others would be dangerous as a permanent state; one dip, for health's sake, but do not stay too long, or you will lose all moral vigour. In our day you are plunged from childhood, whether you like it or not, into the democratic tub. Society thinks for you, imposes its morality upon you; its State acts for you, its fashions and its opinions steal from you the very air you breathe; you have no lungs, no heart, no light of your own. You serve what you despise, you lie in every gesture, word, and thought, you surrender, become nothing. . . . What does it profit us all, if we all surrender? For the sake of whom, or what? To satisfy blind instincts, or rogues? Does God rule, or do some charlatans speak for the oracle? Let us lift the veil, and look the hidden thing behind it in the face. . . . Our Country! A great noble word! The father, brother embracing brother. . . . That is not what your false country offers me, but an enclosure, a pit full of beasts, trenches, barriers, prison bars. . . . My brothers, where are they? Where are those who travail all over the world? Cain, what hast thou done with them? I stretch out my arms; a wave of blood separates us; in my own country I am only an anonymous instrument of assassination. . . . My Country! but it is you who destroy her! . . . My Country was the great community of mankind; you have ravaged it, for thought and liberty know not where to lay their heads in Europe today. I must rebuild my house, the home of us all, for you have none, yours is a dungeon. . . . How can it be done, where shall I look, or find shelter? . . . They have taken everything from me! There is not a free spot on earth or in

the mind; all the sanctuaries of the soul, of art, of science, religion, they are all violated, all enslaved! I am alone, lost, nothing remains to me but death! . . .

When he had torn everything away, there remained nothing but his naked soul. And for the rest of the night, it could only stand chilled and shivering. But a spark lived in this spirit that shivered, in this tiny being lost in the universe like those shapes which the primitive painters represented coming out of the mouth of the dying. With the dawn the feeble flame, stifled under so many falsehoods, began to revive, and was relighted by the first breath of free air; nothing could again extinguish it.

Upon this agony or parturition of the soul there followed a long sad day, the repose of a broken spirit, in a great silence with the aching relief of duty performed. . . . Clerambault sat with his head against the back of his armchair, and thought; his body was feverish, his heart heavy with recollections. The tears fell unnoticed from his eyes, while out of doors nature awoke sadly to the last days of winter, like him stripped and bare. But still there trembled a warmth beneath the icy air, which was to kindle a new fire everywhere.

PART TWO

It was a week before Clerambault could go out again. The terrible crisis through which he had passed had left him weak but resolved, and though the exaltation of his despair had quieted down, he was stoically determined to follow the truth even to the end. The remembrance of the errors in which his mind had delighted, and the half-truths on which it had fed made him humble; he doubted his own strength, and wished to advance step by step. He was ready to welcome the advice of those wiser than himself. He remembered how Perrotin listened to his former confidences with a sarcastic reserve that irritated him at the time, but which now attracted him. His first visit of convalescence was to this wise old friend.

Perrotin was rather short-sighted and selfish, and did not take the trouble to look carefully at things that were not necessary to him, being a closer observer of books than of faces, but he was none the less struck by the alteration in Clerambault's expression.

" My dear friend," said he, " have you been ill? "

" Yes, ill enough," answered Clerambault, " but I have pulled myself together again, and am better now."

" It is the cruelest blow of all," said Perrotin, " to lose at our age, such a friend as your poor boy was to you . . ."

" The most cruel is not his loss," said the father, " it is that I contributed to his death."

" What do you mean, my good friend? " said Perrotin in surprise. " How can you imagine such things to add to your trouble? "

" It was I who shut his eyes," said Clerambault bitterly, " and he has opened mine."

Perrotin pushed aside the work, which according to his

habit he had continued to ruminate upon during the conversation, and looked narrowly at his friend, who bent his head, and began his story in an indistinct voice, sad and charged with feeling. Like a Christian of the early times making public confession, he accused himself of falsehood towards his faith, his heart, and his reason.

When the Apostle saw his Lord in chains, he was afraid and denied Him; but he was not brought so low as to offer his services as executioner. He, Clerambault, had not only deserted the cause of human brotherhood, he had debased it; he had continued to talk of fraternity, while he was stirring up hatred. Like those lying priests who distort the Scriptures to serve their wicked purposes, he had knowingly altered the most generous ideas to disguise murderous passions.

He extolled war, while calling himself a pacifist; professed to be humanitarian, previously putting the enemy outside humanity. . . . Oh, how much franker it would have been to yield to force than to lend himself to its dishonouring compromises! It was thanks to such sophistries as his that the idealism of young men was thrown into the arena. Those old poisoners, the artists and thinkers, had sweetened the death-brew with their honeyed rhetoric, which would have been found out and rejected by every conscience with disgust, if it had not been for their falsehoods. . . .

"The blood of my son is on my head," said Clerambault sadly. "The death of the youth of Europe, in all countries, lies at the door of European thought. It has been everywhere a servant to the hangman."

Perrotin leaned over and took Clerambault's hand. "My poor friend," said he, "you make too much of this. No doubt you are right to acknowledge the errors of judgment into which you have been drawn by public opinion, and I may confess to you now that I was sorry to see it; but you are wrong to ascribe to yourself and other thinkers so much

responsibility for the events of today. One man speaks, another acts; but the speakers do not move the others to action; they are all drifting with the tide. This unfortunate European thought is a bit of drift-wood like the rest, it does not make the current, it is carried along by it."

"It persuades people to yield to it," said Clerambault, "instead of helping the swimmers, and bidding them struggle against it; it says: Let yourself go. . . . No, my friend, do not try to diminish its responsibility, it is the greatest of all. Our thought had the best place from which to see; its business was to keep watch, and if it saw nothing, it was through lack of good-will, for it cannot lay the blame on its eyes, which are clear enough. You know it and so do I, now that I have come to my senses. The same intelligence which darkened my eyes, has now torn away the bandage; how can it be, at the same time, a power for truth and for falsehood?"

Perrotin shook his head.

"Yes, intelligence is so great and so high that she cannot put herself at the service of any other forces without derogation; for if she is no longer mistress and free, she is degraded. It is a case of Roman master debasing the Greek, his superior, and making him his purveyor—*Graeculus,* sophist, *Laeno*. . . . . . To the vulgar the intelligence is a sort of maid-of-all-work, and in this position she displays the sly, dishonest cleverness of her kind. Sometimes she is employed by hatred, pride, or self-interest, and then she flatters these little devils, dressing them up as Idealism, Love, Faith, Liberty, and social generosity; for when a man does not love his neighbour, he says he loves God, his Country, or even Humanity. Sometimes the poor master is himself a slave to the State. Under threat of punishment, the social machine forces him to acts which are repugnant, but the complaisant intelligence persuades him that these are fine and glorious, and performed by him of

his own free will. In either case the intelligence knows what she is about, and is always at our disposition if we really want her to tell us the truth; but we take good care to avoid it, and never to be left alone with her. We manage so as to meet her only in public when we can put leading questions as we please. . . . When all is said, the earth goes round none the less, *e pur se muove;*—the laws of the world are obeyed, and the free mind beholds them. All the rest is vanity; the passions, faith, sincere or insincere, are only the painted face of that necessity which rules the world, without caring for our idols: family, race, country, religion, society, progress. . . . Progress indeed! The great illusion! Humanity is like water that must find its level, and when the cistern brims over a valve opens and it is empty again. . . . A catastrophic rhythm, the heights of civilisation, and then downfall. We rise, and are cast down . . ."

Thus Perrotin calmly unveiled his Thought. She was not much accustomed to going naked; but she forgot that she had a witness, and undressed as if she were alone. She was extremely bold, as is often the thought of a man of letters not obliged to suit the action to the word, but who much prefers, on the contrary, not to do so. The alarmed Clerambault listened with his mouth open; certain words revolted him, others pierced him to the heart; his head swam, but he overcame his weakness, for he was determined to lose nothing of these profundities. He pressed Perrotin with questions: and he, on his part, flattered and smiling, complaisantly unrolled his pyrrhonian visions, as peaceable as they were destructive.

The vapours of the pit were rising all about them; and Clerambault was admiring the ease of this free spirit perched on the edge of the abyss and enjoying it, when the door opened, and the servant came in with a card which he gave to Perrotin.

At once the terrible phantoms of the brain vanished; a trap-door shut out the emptiness, and an official drawing-room rug covered it. Perrotin roused himself and said eagerly: "Certainly, show him in at once." Turning to Clerambault he added:

"Pardon me, my dear friend, it is the Honourable Under-Secretary of State for Public Instruction."

He was already on his feet and went to meet his visitor, a stage-lover looking fellow, with the blue clean-shaven chin of a priest or a Yankee, who held his head very high, and wore in the grey cut-a-way which clothed his well-rounded figure, the rosette which is displayed alike by our heroes and our lackeys. The old gentleman presented Clerambault to him with cheerful alacrity: "Mr. Agénor Clerambault—Mr. Hyacinth Monchéri," and asked the Honourable Under-Secretary of State to what he owed the honour of his visit. The Honourable Under-Secretary, not in the least surprised by the obsequious welcome of the old scholar, settled himself in his armchair with the lofty air of familiarity suitable to the superior position he held over the two representatives of French letters. He represented the State.

Speaking haughtily through his nose, and braying like a dromedary, he extended to Perrotin an invitation from the Minister to preside over a solemn contest of embattled intellectuals from ten nations, in the great amphitheatre of the Sorbonne—"an imprecatory meeting," he called it. Perrotin promptly accepted, and professed himself overcome by the honour. His servile tone before this licensed government ignoramus made a striking contrast with his bold statements a few moments before, and Clerambault, somewhat taken aback, thought of the *Graeculus*.

Mr. "Chéri" walked out with his head in the air, like an ass in a sacred procession, accompanied by Perrotin to the very threshold, and when the friends were once more

alone, Clerambault would have liked to resume the conversation, but he could not conceal that he was a little chilled by what had passed. He asked Perrotin if he meant to state in public the opinions he had just professed, and Perrotin refused, naturally, laughing at his friend's simplicity. What is more, he cautioned him affectionately against proclaiming such ideas from the house-tops. Clerambault was vexed and disputed the point, but in order to make the situation clear to him, and with the utmost frankness, Perrotin described his surroundings, the great minds of the higher University, which he represented officially: historians, philosophers, professors of rhetoric. He spoke of them politely but with a deep half-concealed contempt, and a touch of personal bitterness; for in spite of his prudence, the less intelligent of his colleagues looked on him with suspicion; he was too clever. He said he was like an old blind man's dog in a pack of barking curs; forced to do as they did and bark at the passers-by.

Clerambault did not quarrel with him, but went away with pity in his heart.

He stayed in the house for several days, for this first contact with the outside world had depressed him, and the friend on whom he had relied for guidance had failed him miserably. He was much troubled, for Clerambault was weak and unused to stand alone. Poet as he was, and absolutely sincere, he had never felt it necessary to think independently of others; he had let himself be carried along by their thought, making it his own, becoming its inspired voice and mouth-piece. Now all was suddenly changed. Notwithstanding that night of crisis, his doubts returned upon him; for after fifty a man's nature cannot be transformed at a touch, no matter how much the mind may have retained the elasticity of youth. The light of a revelation does not always shine, like the sun in a clear summer sky, but is more like an arc-light, which often winks and goes out before the current becomes strong. When these irregular pulsations fade out, the shadows appear deeper, and the spirit totters and then—. It was hard for Clerambault to get along without other people.

He decided to visit all his friends, of whom he had many, in the literary world, in the University, and among the intelligent *bourgeoisie*. He was sure to find some among them who, better than he, could divine the problems which beset him, and help him in their solution.

Timidly, without as yet betraying his own mind, he tried to read theirs, to listen and observe; but he had not realised that the veil had fallen from his eyes; and the vision that he saw of a world, once well-known to him, seemed strange and cold.

The whole world of letters was mobilised; so that personalities were no longer to be distinguished. The univer-

sities formed a ministry of domesticated intelligence; its functions were to draw up the acts of the State, its master and patron; the different departments were known by their professional twists.

The professors of literature were above all skilful in developing moral arguments oratorically under the three terms of the syllogism. Their mania was an excessive simplification of argument; they put high-sounding words in the place of reason, and made too much of a few ideas, always the same, lifeless for lack of colour or shading. They had unearthed these weapons of a so-called classic antiquity, the key to which had been jealously guarded throughout the ages by academic Mamelukes, and these eloquent antiquated ideas were falsely called Humanities, though in many respects they offended the common-sense and the heart of humanity as it is today. Still they bore the hall-mark of Rome, prototype of all our modern states, and their authorised exponents were the State rhetoricians.

The philosophers excelled in abstract constructions; they had the art of explaining the concrete by the abstract, the real by its shadow. They systematised some hasty partial observations, melted them in their alembics, and from them deduced laws to regulate the entire world. They strove to subject life, multiple and many-sided, to the unity of the mind, that is, to *their* mind. The time-serving trickeries of a sophistical profession facilitated this imperialism of the reason; they knew how to handle ideas, twisting, stretching, and tying them together like strips of candy; it would have been child's play for them to make a camel pass through the eye of a needle. They could also prove that black was white, and could find in the works of Emanuel Kant the freedom of the world, or Prussian militarism, just as they saw fit.

The historians were the born scribes, attorneys, and lawyers of the Government, charged with the care of its

charters, its title-deeds, and cases, and armed to the teeth for its future quarrels. . . . What is history after all? The story of success, the demonstration of what has been done, just or unjust. The defeated have no history. Be silent, you Persians of Salamis, slaves of Spartacus, Gauls, Arabs of Poitiers, Albigenses, Irish, Indians of both Americas, and colonial peoples generally! . . . When a worthy man revolting against the injustices of his day, puts his hope in posterity by way of consolation, he forgets that this posterity has but little chance to learn of former events. All that can be known is what the advocates of official history think favourable to the cause of their client, the State. A lawyer for the adverse party may possibly intervene—someone of another nation, or of an oppressed social or religious group; but there is small chance for him; the secret is kept too well!

Orators, sophists, and pleaders, the three corporations of the Faculty of Letters,—Letters of State, signed and patented!

The studies of the "scientifics" ought to have protected them better from the suggestions and contagions of the outside world—that is, if they confined themselves to their trade. Unfortunately they have been tempted from it, for the applied sciences have taken so large a place in practical affairs that experts find themselves thrown into the foremost ranks of action, and exposed to all the infections of the public mind. Their self-respect is directly interested in the victory of the community, which can as easily assimilate the heroism of the soldier as the follies and falsehoods of the publicist. Few scientific men have had the strength to keep themselves free; for the most part they have only contributed the rigour, the stiffness of the geometrical mind, added to professional rivalries, always more acute between learned bodies of different nationalities.

The regular writers, poets, and novelists, who have no

official ties, they, at least should have the advantages of their independence; but unfortunately few of them are able to judge for themselves of events which are beyond the limits of their habitual preoccupations, commercial or aesthetic. The greater number, and not the least known, are as ignorant as fishes. It would be best for them to stick to their shop, according to their natural instinct; but their vanity has been foolishly tickled, and they have been urged to mix themselves up with public affairs, and give their opinion on the universe. They can naturally have but scattering views on such subjects, and in default of personal judgment, they drift with the current, reacting with extreme quickness to any shock, for they are ultra-sensitive, with a morbid vanity which exaggerates the thoughts of others when it cannot express their own. This is the only originality at their disposal, and God knows they make the most of it!

What remains? the Clergy? It is they who handle the heaviest explosives; the ideas of Justice, Truth, Right, and God; and they make this artillery fight for their passions. Their absurd pride, of which they are quite unconscious, causes them to lay claim to the property of God, and to the exclusive right to dispose of it wholesale and retail.

It is not so much that they lack sincerity, virtue, or kindness, but they do lack humility; they have none, however much they may profess it. Their practice consists in adoring their navel as they see it reflected in the Talmud, or the Old and New Testaments. They are monsters of pride, not so very far removed from the fool of legend who thought himself God the Father. Is it so much less dangerous to believe oneself His manager, or His secretary?

Clerambault was struck by the morbid character of the intellectual species. In the *bourgeois* caste the power of organisation and expression of ideas has reached almost monstrous proportions. The equilibrium of life is destroyed

by a bureaucracy of the mind which thinks itself much superior to the simple worker. Certainly no one can deny that it has its uses; it collects and classifies thoughts in its pigeon-holes and puts them to various purposes, but the idea rarely occurs to it to examine its material and renew the content of thought.

It remains the vain guardian of a demonetised treasure. If only this mistake were a harmless one; but ideas that are not constantly confronted with reality, which are not frequently dipped into the stream of experience, grow dry, and take on a toxic character. They throw a heavy shadow over the new life, bring on the night and produce fever. What a stupid thraldom to abstract words! Of what use is it to dethrone kings and by what right do we jeer at those who die for their masters, if it is only to put tyrannic entities in their places, which we adorn with their tinsel? It is much better to have a flesh and blood monarch, whom you can control—suppress if necessary—than these abstractions, these invisible despots, that no one knows now, nor ever has known. We deal only with the head Eunuchs, the priests of the hidden Crocodile, as Taine calls him, the wire-pulling ministers who speak in the idol's name.—Ah! let us tear away the veil and know the creature hidden inside of us. There is less danger when man shows frankly as a brute than when he drapes himself in a false and sickly idealism. He does not eliminate his animal instincts, he only deifies and tries to explain them, but as this cannot be done without excessive simplification—according to the law of the mind which in order to grasp must let go an equal amount—he disguises and intensifies them in one direction. Everything that departs from the straight line or that interferes with the strict logic of his mental edifice, he denies; worse he pulls it up by the roots, and commands that it be destroyed in the name of sacred principles. It therefore follows that he cuts down much of the infinite

growth of nature, and allows to stand only the trees of the mind that he chooses—generally those that flourish in deserts and ruins and which there grow abnormally. Of such is the crushing predominance of one single tyrannous form of the Family, of Country, and of the narrow morality which serves them. The poor creature is proud of it all; and it is he who is the victim.

Humanity does not dare to massacre itself from interested motives. It is not proud of its interests, but it does pride itself on its ideas which are a thousand times more deadly. Man sees his own superiority in his ideas, and will fight for them; but herein I perceive his folly, for this warlike idealism is a disease peculiar to him, and its effects are similar to those of alcoholism; they add enormously to wickedness and criminality. This sort of intoxication deteriorates the brain, filling it with hallucinations, to which the living are sacrificed.

What an extraordinary spectacle, seen from the interior of our skulls! A throng of phantoms rising from our overexcited brains: Justice, Liberty, Right, Country. . . . Our poor brains are all equally honest, but each accuses the other of insincerity. In this fantastic shadowy struggle, we can distinguish nothing but the cries and the convulsions of the human animal, possessed by devils. . . . Below are clouds charged with lightnings, where great fierce birds are fighting; the realists, the men of affairs, swarm and gnaw like fleas in a skin; with open mouths, and grasping hands, secretly exciting the folly by which they profit, but in which they do not share. . . .

O Thought! monstrous and splendid flower springing from the humus of our time-honoured instincts! . . . In truth, thou art an element penetrating and impregnating man, but thou dost not spring from him, thy source is beyond him, and thy strength greater than his. Our senses are fairly well-adapted to our needs but our thought is not,

it overflows and maddens us. Very, very few among us men can guide themselves on this torrent; the far greater number are swept along, at random, trusting to chance. The tremendous power of thought is not under man's control; he tries to make it serve him, and his greatest danger is that he believes that it does so; but he is like a child handling explosives; there is no proportion between these colossal engines and the purpose for which his feeble hands employ them. Sometimes they all blow up together. . . .

How guard against this danger? Shall we stifle thought, uproot living ideas? That would mean the castration of man's brain, the loss of his chief stimulus in life; but nevertheless the *eau-de-vie* of his mind contains a poison which is the more to be dreaded because it is spread broadcast among the masses, in the form of adulterated drugs. . . . Rouse thee, Man, and sober thyself! Look about; shake off ideas. Free thyself from thine own thoughts and learn to govern thy gigantic phantoms which devour themselves in their rage. . . . And begin by taking the capitals from the names of those great goddesses, Country, Liberty, Right. Come down from Olympus into the manger, and come without ornaments, without arms, rich only in your beauty, and our love. . . . I do not know the gods of Justice and Liberty; I only know my brother-man, and his acts, sometimes just, sometimes unjust; and I also know of peoples, all aspiring to real liberty but all deprived of it, and who all, more or less, submit to oppression.

THE sight of this world in a fever-fit would have filled a sage with the desire to withdraw until the attack was over; but Clerambault was not a sage. He knew this, and he also knew that it was vain to speak; but none the less he felt that he must, that he should end by speaking. He wished to delay the dangerous moment, and his timidity, which shrank from single combat with the world, sought about him for a companion in thought. The fight would not be so hard if there were two or three together.

The first whose feeling he cautiously sounded were some unfortunate people who, like him, had lost a son. The father, a well-known painter, had a studio in the Rue Notre Dame des Champs. His name was Omer Calville and the Clerambaults were neighbourly with him and his wife, a nice old couple of the middle class, devoted to each other. They had that gentleness, common to many artists of their day, who had known Carrière, and caught remote reflections of Tolstoïsm, which, like their simplicity, appeared a little artificial, for though it harmonised with their real goodness of heart, the fashion of the time had added a touch of exaggeration.

Those artists who sincerely profess their religious respect for all that lives, are less capable than anyone else of understanding the passions of war. The Calvilles had held themselves outside the struggle; they did not protest, they accepted it, without acquiescing, as one accepts sickness, death, or the wickedness of men, with a dignified sadness.

When Clerambault read them his burning poems they listened politely and made little response—but strangely enough, at the very time that Clerambault, cured of his

warlike illusions, turned to them, he found that they had changed places with him. The death of their son had produced on them the opposite effect. And now they were awkwardly taking part in the conflict, as if to replace their lost boy. They snuffed up eagerly all the stench in the papers, and Clerambault found them actually rejoicing, in their misery, over the assertion that the United States was prepared to fight for twenty years.

"What would become of France, of Europe, in twenty years?" he tried to say, but they hastily put this thought away from them with much irritation, almost as if it were improper to mention, or even to think of such a thing.

The question was to conquer; at what price? That could be settled afterwards.—Conquer? Suppose there were no more conquerors left in France? Never mind, so long as the others are beaten. No, it should not be that the blood of their son had been shed in vain.

"And to avenge his death, must other innocent lives also be sacrificed?" thought Clerambault, and in the hearts of these good people he read the answer: "Why not?" The same idea was in the minds of all those who, like the Calvilles, had lost through the war what they held dearest—a son, a husband, or a brother. . . .

"Let the others suffer as we have, we have nothing left to lose." Was there nothing left? In truth there was one thing only, on which the fierce egotism of these mourners kept jealous guard; their faith in the necessity of these sacrifices. Let no one try to shake that, or doubt that the cause was sacred for which these dear ones fell. The leaders of the war knew this, and well did they understand how to make the most of such a lure. No, by these sad fire-sides there was no place for Clerambault's doubts and feelings of pity.

"They had no pity on us," thought the unhappy ones, "why should we pity them?"

Some had suffered less, but what characterised nearly all of these *bourgeois* was the reverence they had for the great slogans of the past: "Committee of Public Safety," "The Country in Danger," "Plutarch," "*De Viris*," "Horace," —it seemed impossible for them to look at the present with eyes of today; perhaps they had no eyes to see with. Outside of the narrow circle of their own affairs, how many of our anemic *bourgeoisie* have the power to think for themselves, after they have reached the age of thirty? It would never cross their minds; their thoughts are furnished to them like their provisions, only more cheaply. For one or two cents a day they get them from their papers. The more intelligent, who look for thought in books, do not give themselves the trouble to seek it also in life, and think that one is the reflection of the other. Like the prematurely aged, their members become stiff, and their minds petrified.

In the great flock of those ruminating souls who fed on the past, the group of bigots pinning its faith to the French Revolution was easily distinguished. Among the backward *bourgeoisie* they were reckoned incendiary in former days; —about the time of the 16th of May, or a little later. Like quinquagenarians grown stolid and settled, they looked back with pride to their wild conduct, and lived on the memory of the emotions of by-gone days. If their mirror showed them no change, the world had altered around them without their suspecting it, while they continued to copy their antiquated models. It is a curious imitative instinct, a slavery of the brain, to remain hypnotised by some point in the past, instead of trying to follow Proteus in his course—the life of change. One picks up the old skin which the young snake has thrown off long ago, and tries to sew it together again. These pedantic admirers of old revolutions believe that those of the future will be made on the same lines. They will not see that the new liberty must have a gait of its own, and will overleap

barriers before which its grandmother of ninety-three stopped, out of breath. They are also much more vexed by the disrespect of the young people who have gone by them, than they are by the spiteful yelping of the old whom they have left behind; this is only natural, for these young folks make them feel their age, and then it is their turn to yelp.

So it ever shall be; as they grow older there are very few men willing to let life take its own course, and who are generous enough to look at the future through the eyes of their juniors, as their own sight grows dim. The greater number of those who loved liberty in their youth, want to make a cage of it now for the new broods, because they can no longer fly themselves.

The followers of the national revolutionary cult—in the style of Danton, or of Robespierre—were the bitterest adversaries of the internationalism of today; though they did not always agree perfectly amongst themselves, and the friends of Danton and Robespierre, with the shadow of the guillotine between them, hurled the epithet of heretic at each other, with the deadliest threats. They did, however, all agree on one point, and devoted to destruction those who did not believe that Liberty is shot out of the mouth of cannon, those who dared to feel the same aversion towards violence, whether it was exerted by Caesar, Demos, or his satellites, or even if it was in the name of right and liberty itself. The face underneath is the same, no matter what mask may be worn.

Clerambault knew several of these fanatics, but there was no point in discussing with them whether the right, or its counterfeit, were only on one side in war; it would have been equally sensible to argue about the Holy Inquisition with a Manichee. Lay religions have their great seminaries and secret societies where they deposit their doctrinal treasures with great pride. He who departs from these is excommunicated—until he in turn belongs to the past, when

he becomes a god, and can excommunicate in future himself.

If Clerambault was not tempted to convert these hardened intellectuals with their stiff helmet of truth, he knew others who had not the same proud certainty; far from it. Those who sinned rather through softness and pure dilettantism—Arsène Asselin was one of these, an amiable Parisian, unmarried, a man of the world, clever and sceptical; and as much shocked by a defect in sentiment as in expression. How could he like extremes of thought, which are the cultures in which the germs of war develop? His critical and sarcastic spirit inclined him towards doubt; so there was no reason why he should not have understood Clerambault's point of view, and he came within an ace of doing so. His choice depended on some fortuitous circumstances, but from the moment that he turned his face in the other direction, it was impossible for him to go back; and the more he stuck in the mud, the more obstinate he grew. French self-respect cannot bear to admit its mistakes; it would rather die in defence of them. . . . But French or not, how many are there in the world who would have the strength of mind to say: "I have made a mistake, we must begin all over again." Better deny the evidence . . . "To the bitter end" . . . And then break down.

Alexandre Mignon was a before-the-war pacifist and an old friend of Clerambault's. He was a *bourgeois* of about his own age, intellectual, a member of the University, and justly respected for the dignity of his life. He should not be confounded with those parlour pacifists covered with official decorations and grand cordons of international orders, for whom peace is a gilt-edged investment in quiet times. For thirty years he had sincerely denounced the dangerous intrigues of the dishonest politicians and speculators of his country; he was a member of the League for the

Rights of Man, and loved to make speeches for either cause, as it might happen. It was enough if his client purported to be oppressed; it did not matter if the victim had been a would-be oppressor himself. His blundering generosity sometimes made him ridiculous, but he was always liked. He did not object to the ridicule, nor did he dread a little unpopularity, as long as he was surrounded by his own group, whose approbation was necessary to him. As a member of a group which was independent when they all held together, he thought that he was an independent person, but this was not the case. Union is strength they say, but it accustoms us to lean upon it, as Alexandre Mignon found to his cost.

The death of Jaurès had broken up the group; and lacking one voice—the first to speak—all the others failed. They waited for the password that no one dared to give. When the torrent broke over them these generous but weak men were uncertain, and were carried away by the first rush. They did not understand nor approve of it, but they could make no resistance. From the beginning desertions began in their ranks, produced largely by the terrible speech-makers who then governed the country—demagogue lawyers, practised in all the sophistries of republican idealogy: "War for Peace, Lasting Peace at the End . . ." (*Requiescat*) . . . In these artifices the poor pacifists saw a way to get out of their dilemma; it was not a very brilliant way and they were not proud of it, but it was their only chance. They hoped to reconcile their pacific principles with the fact of violence by means of "big talk" which did not sound to them as outrageous as it really was. To refuse would have been to give themselves up to the war-like pack, which would have devoured them.

Alexandre Mignon would have had courage to face the bloody jaws if he had had his little community at his back, but alone it was beyond his strength. He let things go at

first, without committing himself, but he suffered, passing through agonies something like those of Clerambault, but with a different result. He was less impulsive and more intellectual. In order to efface his last scruples he hid them under close reasoning, and with the aid of his colleagues he laboriously proved by a + b that war was the duty of consistent pacifism. His League had every advantage in dwelling on the criminal acts of the enemy; but did not dwell on those in its own camp. Alexandre Mignon had occasional glimpses of the universal injustice; an intolerable vision, on which he closed his shutters. . . .

In proportion as he was swaddled in his war arguments, it became more difficult for him to disentangle himself, and he persisted more and more. Suppose a child carelessly pulls off the wing of an insect; it is only a piece of nervous awkwardness, but the insect is done for, and the child ashamed and irritated, tears the poor creature to pieces to relieve his own feelings.

The pleasure with which he listened to Clerambault's *mea culpa* may be imagined; but the effect was surprising. Mignon, already ill at ease, turned on Clerambault, whose self-accusations seemed to point at him, and treated him like an enemy. In the sequel no one was more violent than Mignon against this living remorse.

There were some politicians who would have understood Clerambault better, for they knew as much as he did and perhaps more; but it did not keep them awake at night. They had been used to mental trickery ever since they cut their first teeth, and were expert at *combinazione;* they had the illusion of serving their party, cheaply gained by a few compromises here and there! . . . To think and walk straightforwardly was the one thing impossible to these flabby shufflers, who backed, or advanced in spirals, who dragged their banner in the mud, by way of assuring its

triumph, and who, to reach the Capitol, would have crawled up the steps on their stomachs.

Here and there some clear-sighted spirits were hidden, but they were easier to guess at than to see; they were melancholy glow-worms who had put out their lanterns in their fright, so that not a gleam was visible. They certainly had no faith in the war, but neither did they believe in anything against it;—fatalists, pessimists all.

It was clear to Clerambault that when personal energy is lacking, the highest qualities of head and heart only increase the public servitude. The stoicism which submits to the laws of the universe prevents us from resisting those which are cruel, instead of saying to destiny: "No, thus far, and no farther!" . . . If it pushes on you will see the stoic stand politely aside, as he murmurs: "Please come in!"—Cultivated heroism, the taste for the superhuman, even the inhuman, chokes the soul with its sacrifices, and the more absurd they are, the more sublime they appear—Christians of today, more generous than their Master, render all to Caesar; a cause seems sacred to them from the moment that they are asked to immolate themselves to it. To the ignominy of war they piously kindle the flame of their faith, and throw their bodies on the altar. The people bend their backs, and accept with a passive, ironic resignation. . . . "No need to borrow trouble." Ages and ages of misery have rolled over this stone, but in the end stones do wear down and become mud.

CLERAMBAULT tried to talk with one and another of these people but found himself everywhere opposed by the same hidden, half-unconscious resistance. They were armed with the will not to hear, or rather with a remarkable not-will to hear. Their minds were as impervious to contrary arguments as a duck's feathers to water. Men in general are endowed, for their comfort, with a precious faculty; they can make themselves blind and deaf when it does not suit them to see and hear, and when by chance they pick up some inconvenient object, they drop it quickly, and forget it as soon as possible. How many citizens in any country knew the truth about the divided responsibility for the war, or about the ill-omened part played by their politicians, who, themselves deceived, pretended with great success to be ignorant!

If everyone is trying to escape from himself, it is clear, that a man will run faster from someone who, like Clerambault, would help him to recover himself. In order to avoid their own conscience, intelligent, serious, honourable men do not blush to employ the little tricks of a woman or a child trying to get its own way; and dreading a discussion which might unsettle them, they would seize on the first awkward expression used by Clerambault. They would separate it from the context, dress it up if necessary, and with raised voices and eyes starting from their heads, feign an indignation which they ended by feeling sincerely. They would repeat "*mordicus,*" even after the proof, and if obliged to admit it, would rush off, banging the door after them: "Can't stand any more of that!" But two, or perhaps ten days after, they would come back and renew the argument, as if nothing had happened.

Some treacherous ones provoked Clerambault to say more than he intended, and having gained their point, exploded with rage. But even the most good-natured told him that he lacked good sense—" good," of course, meaning " my way of thinking."

There were the clever talkers also who, having nothing to fear from a contest of words, began an argument in the flattering hope that they could bring the wandering sheep back to the fold. It was not his main idea that they disputed, so much as its desirability; they would appeal to Clerambault's better side:

" Certainly, of course, I think as you do, or almost as you do; I understand what you mean; . . . but you ought to be cautious, my dear friend, not to trouble the consciences of those who have to fight. You cannot always speak the truth, at least not all at once. These fine things may come about . . . in fifty years, perhaps. We must wait and not go too fast for nature . . ."

" Wait, until the appetites of the exploiter, and the folly of the exploited are equally exhausted? When the thinking of clear-sighted, better sort gives way to the blindness of coarser minds, it goes directly contrary to that nature which it professes to follow, and against the historical destiny which they themselves make it a point of honour to obey. For do we respect the plans of Nature when we stifle one part of its thought, and the higher, at that? The theory which would lop off the strongest forces from life, and bend it before the passions of the multitude, would result in suppressing the advance-guard, and leaving the army without leaders. . . . When the boat leans over, must I not throw my weight on the other side to keep an even keel? Or must we all sit down to leeward? Advanced ideas are Nature's weights, intended to counter-balance the heavy stubborn past; without them the boat will upset. . . . The welcome they will receive is a side issue. Their advo-

cates can expect to be stoned, but whoever has these things in his mind and does not speak them, is a dishonoured man. He is like a soldier in battle, to whom a dangerous message is entrusted; is he free to shirk it? . . . Why does not everyone understand these things? "

When they saw that persuasion had no effect on Clerambault, they unmasked their batteries and violently taxed him with absurd, criminal pride. They asked him if he thought himself cleverer than anyone else, that he set himself up against the entire nation? On what did he found this overweening self-confidence? Duty consists in being humble, and keeping to one's proper place in the community; when it commands, our duty is to bow to it, and, whether we agree or not, we must carry out its orders. Woe to the rebel against the soul of his country! To be in the right and in opposition to her is to be wrong, and in the hour of action wrong is a crime. The Republic demands obedience from her sons.

" The Republic or death," said Clerambault ironically. " And this is a free country? Free, yes, because there have always been, and always will be some souls like mine, which refuse to bend to a yoke which their conscience disavows. We are become a nation of tyrants. There was no great advantage in taking the Bastille. In the old days one ran the risk of perpetual imprisonment if one made so bold as to differ from the Prince—the fagot, if you did not agree with the Church; but now you must think with forty millions of men and follow them in their frantic contradictions. One day you must scream: " Down with England! " Tomorrow it will be: " Down with Germany! " and the next day it may be the turn of Italy; and *da capo* in a week or two. Today we acclaim a man or an idea, tomorrow we shall insult him; and anyone who refuses risks dishonour—or a pistol bullet. This is the most ignoble and shameful servitude of all! . . . By what right do a hun-

dred, a thousand, one or forty millions of men, demand that I shall renounce my soul? Each of them has one, like mine. Forty millions of souls together often make only one, which has denied itself forty millions of times. . . . I think what I think. Go you and do likewise. The living truth can be re-born only from the equilibrium of opposing thoughts. To make the citizen respect the city, it must be reciprocal; each has his soul. It is his right and his first duty is to be true to it. . . . I have no illusions, and in this world of prey I do not attribute an exaggerated importance to my own conscience, but however small we may be or little we may do, we must exist. We are all liable to err, but deceived or not, a man should be sincere; an honest mistake is not a lie, but a stage on the road to truth. The real lie is to fear the truth and try to stifle it. Even if you were a thousand times right, if you resort to force to crush a sincere mistake, you commit the most odious crime against reason itself. If reason is persecutor, and error persecuted, I am for the victim, for error has rights as well as truth. . . . Truth—the real truth, is to be always seeking what is true, and to respect the efforts of those who suffer in the pursuit. If you insult a man who is striving to hew out his path, if you persecute him who wishes, and perhaps fails, to find less inhuman roads for human progress, you make a martyr of him. Your way is the best, the only one, you say? Follow it then, and let me follow mine. I do not oblige you to come with me, so why are you angry? Are you afraid lest I should prove to be in the right?

THE impression left on Clerambault's mind by his last interview with Perrotin, was one of sadness and pity; but on the whole he decided to go again to see him, having by now arrived at a better understanding of his ironical and prudent attitude towards the world. If he had retained but small esteem for Perrotin's character, on the other hand the great intelligence of the old scholar continued to command his highest admiration; he still saw in him a guide towards the light.

Perrotin was not exactly delighted to see Clerambault again. The other day he had been obliged to commit a little cowardly act; he did not mind that, for he was used to it, but it was under the eyes of an incorruptible witness, and he was too clever not to have retained a disagreeable memory of the incident. He foresaw a discussion, and he hated to discuss with people who had convictions—there is no fun in it, they take everything so seriously—however, he was courteous, weak, good-natured, and unable to refuse when anyone attacked him vigorously. He tried at first to avoid serious questions; but when he saw that Clerambault really needed him, and that perhaps he might save him from some imprudence, he consented, with a sigh, to give up his morning.

Clerambault related to him all that he had done, and the result. He realised that the world around served other gods than his; for he had shared the same faith, and even now was impartial enough to see a certain grandeur and beauty in it. Since these last trials, however, he had also seen its horror and absurdity; he had abandoned it for a new ideal, which would certainly bring him into conflict with the old. With brief and passionate touches, Cleram-

bault explained this new ideal, and called on Perrotin to say if to him it seemed true or false; entreating his friend to lay aside considerations of tact or politeness, to speak clearly and frankly. Struck by Clerambault's tragic earnestness, Perrotin changed his tone, and answered in the same key.

"It amounts to this, that you think I am wrong?" asked Clerambault, distressed. "I see that I am alone in this, but I cannot help it. Do not try to spare me now, but tell me, am I wrong to think as I do?"

"No, my friend," replied Perrotin gravely, "you are right."

"Then you agree that I ought to fight against these murderous mistakes?"

"Ah, that is another matter."

"Ought I to betray the truth, when it is clear to me?"

"Truth, my poor friend! No, don't look at me like that, I shall not follow Pilate's example, and ask: What is Truth? Like you, and longer than you perhaps, I have loved her. But Truth, my dear Sir, is higher than you, than I, than all those that ever have, or ever will inhabit the earth. We may believe that we obey the Great Goddess, but in fact we serve only the *Dî minores,* the saints in the side chapels, alternately adored and neglected by the crowd. The one in honour of whom men are now killing and mutilating themselves in a Corybantic frenzy, can evidently be no longer yours nor mine. The ideal of the Country is a god, great and cruel, who will leave to the future the image of a sort of bugaboo Cronos, or of his Olympian son whom Christ superseded. Your ideal of humanity is the highest rung of the ladder, the announcement of the new god—who will be dethroned later on by one higher still, who will embrace more of the universe. The ideal and life never cease to evolve, and this continual advance forms the genuine interest of the world to the liberal mind; but

if the mind can constantly rise without rest or interruption, in the world of fact progress is made step by step, and a scant few inches are gained in the whole of a lifetime. Humanity limps along, and your mistake, the only one, is that you are two or three days' journey ahead of it, but— perhaps with good reason—that is one of the mistakes most difficult to forgive. When an ideal, like that of Country, begins to age with the form of society to which it is strongly bound, the slightest attack makes it ferocious, and it will blaze out furiously in its exasperation. The reason is that it has already begun to doubt itself. Do not deceive yourself; these millions of men who are slaughtering each other now in the name of patriotism, have no longer the early enthusiasm of 1792, or 1813, even though there is more noise and ruin today. Many of those who die, and those who send them to their death, feel in their hearts the horrible touch of doubt; but entangled as they are, too weak to escape, or even to imagine a way of salvation, they proclaim their injured faith with a kind of despair, and throw themselves blindly into the abyss. They would like to throw in also those who first raised doubts in them by words or actions. To wish to destroy the dream of those who are dying for its sake, is to wish to kill twice over."

Clerambault held out his hand to stop him:—"Ah! you have no need to tell me that, and it tortures me. Do you think I am insensible to the pain of these poor souls whose faith I undermine? Respect the beliefs of others; offend not one of these little ones. . . . My God! what can I do? Help me to get out of this dilemma; shall I see wrong done, let men go to ruin,—or risk injuring them, wound their faith, draw hatred upon myself when I try to save them? . . . Show me the law! "

"Save yourself."

"But that would be to lose myself, if the price is the life of others, if we do nothing. You and I, no effort would be

too great,—the ruin of Europe, of the whole world, is imminent."

Perrotin sat quietly, his elbows on the arms of his chair, his hands folded over his Buddha-like belly. He twirled his thumbs, looking kindly at Clerambault, shook his head, and replied: "Your generous heart, and your artistic sensibilities urge you too far, my friend, but fortunately the world is not near its end. This is not the first time. And there will be many others. What is happening today is painful, certainly, but not in the least abnormal. War has never kept the earth from turning on its axis, nor prevented the evolution of life; it is even one of the forms of its evolution. Let an old scholar and philosopher oppose his calm inhumanity to your holy Man of Sorrows. In spite of all it may bring you some benefit. This struggle, this crisis which alarms you so much, is no more than a simple case of systole, a cosmic contraction, tumultuous, but regulated, like the folding of the earth crust accompanied by destructive earthquakes. Humanity is tightening. And war is its *seismos*. Yesterday, in all countries, provinces were at war with each other. Before that, in each province, cities fought together. Now that national unity has been reached, a larger unity develops. It is certainly regrettable that it should take place by violence, but that is the natural method. Of the explosive mixture of conflicting elements in conflict, a new chemical body will be born. Will it be in the East, or in Europe? I cannot tell; but surely what results will have new properties, more valuable than its parts. The end is not yet. The war of which we are now witnesses is magnificent . . . (I beg your pardon; I mean magnificent to the mind, where suffering does not exist) . . . Greater, finer conflicts still are preparing. These poor childish peoples who imagine that they can disturb the peace of eternity with their cannon shots! . . . The whole universe must first pass through the retort. We shall have

a war between the two Americas, one between the New World and the Yellow Continent, then the conquerors and the rest of the world. . . . That is enough to fill up a few centuries. And I may not have seen all, my eyes are not very good. Naturally each of these shocks will lead to social struggles.

"It will all be accomplished in about a dozen centuries. (I am rather inclined to think that it will be more rapid than it seems by comparison with the past, for the movement becomes accelerated as it proceeds.) No doubt we shall arrive at a rather impoverished synthesis, for many constituent elements, some good, some bad, will be destroyed in the process, the one being too delicate to resist the hostile environment, the other injurious and impossible to assimilate. Then we shall have the celebrated United States of the whole world; and this union will be all the more solid, because, as is probable, man will be menaced by a common danger. The canals of Mars, the drying-up or cooling-off of the planet, some mysterious plague, the pendulum of Poe, in short, the vision of an inevitable death overwhelming the human race. . . . There will be great things to behold! The Genius of the race, stretched to the uttermost, in its last agonies.

"There will be, on the other hand, very little liberty; human multiplicity when near its end will fuse itself into a Unity of Will. Do we not see the beginnings already? Thus, without abrupt mutations, will be effected the reintegration of the complex in the one, of old Empedocles' Hatred in Love."

"And what then?"

"After that? A rest, and then it will all begin over again, there can be no doubt. A young cycle. The new Kalpa. The world will turn once more, on the re-forged wheel."

"And what is the answer to the riddle?"

"The Hindoos would tell you Siva. Siva, who creates and destroys; destroys and creates."

"What a hideous dream."

"That is an affair of temperament. Wisdom liberates. To the Hindoos, Buddha is the deliverer. As for me, curiosity is a sufficient reward."

"It would not be enough for me, and I cannot content myself either with the wisdom of a selfish Buddha, who sets himself free by deserting the rest. I know the Hindoos as you do, and I love them, but even among them, Buddha has not said the last word of wisdom. Do you remember that Bodhisattva, the Master of Pity, who swore not to become Buddha, never to find freedom in Nirvana, until he had cured all pain, redeemed all crimes, consoled all sorrows?"

Perrotin smiled and patted Clerambault's hand affectionately as he looked at his troubled face.

"Dear old Bodhisattva," he said, "what do you want to do? And whom would you save?"

"Oh, I know well enough," said Clerambault, hanging his head. "I know how small I am, how little I can do, the weakness of my wishes and protestations. Do not think me so vain; but how can I help it, if I feel it is my duty to speak?"

"Your duty is to do what is right and reasonable; not to sacrifice yourself in vain."

"Do you certainly know what is in vain? Can you tell beforehand which seed will germinate and which will turn out sterile and perish? But you sow seed nevertheless. What progress would ever have been made, if those who bore the germ of it had stopped terrified before the enormous mass of accumulated routine which hung ready to crush them, above their heads."

"I admit that a scholar is bound to defend the Truth

that he has discovered, but is this social question your mission? You are a poet; keep to your dreams, and may they prove a defence to you! "

" Before considering myself as a poet, I consider myself as a man, and every honest man has a mission."

" A mind like yours is too precious and valuable to be sacrificed, it would be murder."

" Yes, you are willing to sacrifice people who have little to lose." He was silent for a moment, and then went on:

" Perrotin, I have often thought that we, men of thought, artists, all of us, we do not live up to our obligations. Not only now, but for a long time, perhaps always. We are custodians of the portion of Truth that is in us, a little light, which we have prudently kept for ourselves. More than once this has troubled me, but I shut my eyes to it then; now they have been unsealed by suffering. We are the privileged ones, and that lays duties upon us which we have not fulfilled; we are afraid of compromising ourselves. There is an aristocracy of the mind, which claims to succeed to that of blood; but it forgets that the privileges of the old order were first purchased with blood. For ages mankind has listened to words of wisdom, but it is rare to see the wise men offer themselves as a sacrifice, though it would do no harm if the world should see some of them stake their lives on their doctrines, as in the heroic days. Sacrifice is the condition of fecundity. To make others believe, you must believe first yourself, and prove it. Men do not see a truth simply because it exists, it must have the breath of life; and this spirit which is ours, we can and ought to give. If not, our thoughts are only amusements of dilettanti—a play, which deserves only a little applause. Men who advance the history of the world make stepping-stones of their own lives. How much higher than all our great men was the Son of the carpenter of Galilee.

Humanity knows the difference between them and the Saviour."

"But did He save it?

'When Jahveh speaks: "'Tis my desire,"
His people work to feed the fire.'"

"Your circle of flame is the last terror, and Man exists only to break through, that he may come out of it free."

"Free?" repeated Perrotin with his quiet smile.

"Yes, free! It is the highest good, but few reach it, although the name is common enough. It is as exceptional as real beauty, or real goodness. By a free man I mean one who can liberate himself from himself, his passions, his blind instincts, those of his surroundings, or of the moment. It is said that he does this in obedience to the voice of reason; but reason in the sense that you give it, is a mirage. It is only another passion, hardened, intellectualised, and therefore fanatical. No, he must put himself out of sight, in order to get a clear view over the clouds of dust raised by the flock on the road of today, to take in the whole horizon, so as to put events in their proper place in the scheme of the universe."

"Then," said Perrotin, "he must accommodate himself to the laws of that universe."

"Not necessarily," said Clerambault, "he can oppose them with a clear conscience if they are contrary to right and happiness. Liberty consists in that very thing, that a free man is in himself a conscious law of the universe, a counter-balance to the crushing machine, the automaton of Spitteler, the bronze *Ananké*. I see the universal Being, three parts of him still embedded in the clay, the bark, or the stone, undergoing the implacable laws of the matter in which he is encrusted. His breath and his eyes alone are free; "I hope," says his look. And his breath declares,

"I will!" With the help of these he struggles to release himself. We are the look and the breath, that is what makes a free man."

"The look is enough for me," said Perrotin gently.

"And without the breath I should die!" exclaimed Clerambault.

In a man of thought there is a wide interval between the word and the deed. Even when a thing is decided upon, he finds pretexts for putting it off to another day, for he sees only too clearly what will follow; what pains and troubles. And to what end? In order to calm his restless soul he pours out a flood of energetic language on his intimate friends, or to himself alone, and in this way gains the illusion of action cheaply enough. In the bottom of his heart he does not believe in it, but like Hamlet, he waits till circumstances shall force his hand.

Clerambault was brave enough when he was talking to the indulgent Perrotin, but he had scarcely got home when he was seized again by his hesitations. Sharpened by his sorrow, his sensitiveness anticipated the emotions of those around him; he imagined the discord that his words would cause between himself and his wife, and worse, without exactly knowing why, he was not sure of his daughter's sympathy, and shrank from the trial. The risk was too great for an affectionate heart like his.

Matters stood thus, when a doctor of his acquaintance wrote that he had a man dangerously wounded in his hospital who had been in the great Champagne offensive, and had known Maxime. Clerambault went at once to see him.

On the bed he saw a man who might have been of any age. He lay still on his back, swathed like a mummy, his thin peasant-face all wrinkled and brown, with the big nose and grey beard emerging from the white bandages. Outside the sheet you could see his right hand, rough and work-worn; a joint of the middle-finger was missing—but that did not matter, it was a peace injury. His eyes looked

out calmly under the bushy eyebrows; their clear grey light was unexpected in the burned face.

Clerambault came close and asked him how he did, and the man thanked him politely, without giving details, as if it were not worth the trouble to talk about oneself.

"You are very good, Sir. I am getting on all right." But Clerambault persisted affectionately, and it did not take long for the grey eyes to see that there was something deeper than curiosity in the blue eyes that bent over him.

"Where are you wounded?" asked Clerambault.

"Oh, a little of everywhere; it would take too long to tell you, Sir." But as his visitor continued to press him:

"There is a wound wherever they could find a place. Shot up, all over. I never should have thought there would have been room enough on a little man like me."

Clerambault found out at last that he had received about a score of wounds; seventeen, to be exact. He had been literally sprinkled—he called it "interlarded"—with shrapnel.

"Wounded in seventeen places!" cried Clerambault.

"I have only a dozen left," said the man.

"Did they cure the others?"

"No, they cut my legs off." Clerambault was so shocked that he almost forgot the object of his visit. Great Heaven! What agonies! Our sufferings, in comparison, are a drop in the ocean. . . . He put his hand over the rough one, and pressed it. The calm grey eyes took in Clerambault from his feet to the crape on his hat.

"You have lost someone?"

"Yes," said Clerambault, pulling himself together, "you must have known Sergeant Clerambault?"

"Surely," said the man, "I knew him."

"He was my son."

The grey eyes softened.

"Ah, Sir! I *am* sorry for you. I should think I did know him, poor little chap! We were together for nearly

a year, and a year like that counts, I can tell you! Day after day, we were like moles burrowing in the same hole. . . . We had our share of trouble."

"Did he suffer much?"

"Well, Sir, it *was* pretty bad sometimes; hard on the boy, just at the first. You see he wasn't used to it, like us."

"You come from the country?"

"I was labourer on a farm. You have to live with the beasts, and you get to be like 'em. But it is the truth I tell you now, Sir, that men do treat each other worse than the beasts. 'Be kind to the animals.' That was on a notice a joker stuck up in our trench. . . . But what isn't good enough for them is good enough for us. All right; I'm not kicking. Things are like that. We have to take it as it comes. But you could see that the little Sergeant had never been up against it before; the rain and the mud, and the meanness; the dirt worst of all, everything that you touch, your food, your skin, full of vermin. . . . He came close to crying, I could see, once or twice, when he was new to it. I wouldn't let on that I noticed, for the boy was proud, didn't want any help, but I would jolly him, try to cheer him up, lend him a hand sometimes; he was glad to get it. You see you have to get together. But before long he could stick it out as well as anybody; then it was his turn to help me. I never heard him squeal, and we had gay times together—must have a joke now and then, no matter what happens. It keeps off bad luck."

Clerambault sat and listened with a heavy heart.

"Was he happier towards the last?" he asked.

"Yes, Sir, I think he was what you call resigned, just like we all were. I don't know how it is, but you all seem to start out with the same foot in the morning. We are all different, but somehow, after a while it seems as if we were growing alike. It's better, too, that way. You don't mind

things so much all in a bunch. . . . It's only when you get leave, and after you come back—it's bad, nothing goes right any more. You ought to have seen the little Sergeant that last time."

Clerambault felt a pang as he said quickly:

"When he came back?"

"He was very low. I don't know as I ever saw him so bad before."

An agonised expression came over Clerambault's face, and at his gesture, the wounded man who had been looking at the ceiling while he talked, turned his eyes and understood, for he added at once:

"He pulled himself together again, after that."

"Tell me what he said to you, tell me everything," said Clerambault again taking his hand.

The sick man hesitated and answered.

"I don't think I just remember what he said." Then he shut his eyes, and lay still, while Clerambault bent over him and tried to see what was before those eyes under their closed lids.

An icy moonless night. From the bottom of the hollow *boyau* one could see the cold sky and the fixed stars. Bullets rattled on the hard ground. Maxime and his friend sat huddled up in the trench, smoking with their chins on their knees. The lad had come back that day from Paris. He was depressed, would not answer questions, shut himself up in a sulky silence. The other had left him all the afternoon to bear his trouble alone. Now here in the darkness he felt that the moment had come, and sat a little closer, for he knew that the boy would speak of his own accord. A bullet over their heads glanced off, knocking down a lump of frozen turf.

"Hullo, old gravedigger," said the other, "don't get too fresh."

"Might as well make an end of it now," said Maxime. "That's what they all seem to want."

"Give the boche your skin for a present? I'll say you're generous!"

"It's not only the boches; they all have a hand in it."

"Who, all?"

"All of them back there where I come from, in Paris, friends and relations; the people on the other side of the grave, the live ones.—As for us, we are as good as dead."

In the long silence that followed they could hear the scream of a shell across the sky. Maxime's comrade blew out a mouthful of smoke. "Well, youngster," he said, "it didn't go right, back there this time, did it?—I guessed as much!"

"I don't know why."

"When one is hurt, and the other isn't, they haven't much to say to one another."

"Oh, they suffer too."

"Not the same. You can't make a man know what a toothache is unless he feels it. Can't be done. Go to them all snuggled up in their beds, and make them understand how it is out here! . . . It's nothing new to me. I didn't have to wait for the war. Always have lived like this. But do you believe when I was working in the soil, sweating all the fat off my bones, that any of them bothered their heads about me? I don't mean that there's any harm in them, nor much good, either, but like anybody else, they don't see how it is. To understand a thing properly you've got to take hold of it yourself, take the work, and the hurt. If not, and that's what it is, you know—might as well make up your mind—no use trying to explain. That's the way things are, and we can't do anything about it."

"Life would not be worth living, if it were as bad as that."

"Why not, by gosh? I've stuck it out all this time,

and you're just as good as me, better, because you've got more brains and can learn. That's the way to get on, the harder it is the more it teaches you. And then when you're together, like us here, and things are rocky, it's not a pleasure, exactly, but it ain't all pain. The worst is to be off by yourself; and you're not lonesome, are you, boy?"

Maxime looked him in the face, as he answered:

"I was back there, but I don't feel it here with you."

The man who lay on the bed said nothing of what had been passing before his closed eyes. He turned them tranquilly on the father, whose agonised look seemed to implore him to speak. And then, with an awkward kindness, he tried to explain that if the boy was down-hearted it was probably because he had just left home, but *they* had cheered him up as well as they could; they knew how he felt. He had never known what it was to have a father himself, but when he was a kid he used to think what luck it would be to have one. . . . "So I thought I might try. I spoke to him, Sir, like you would yourself, . . . and he soon quieted down. He said, all the same, there was one thing we got out of this blooming war; that there were lots of poor devils in the world who don't know each other, but are all made alike. Sometimes we call 'em our brothers, in sermons and places like that, but no one takes much stock in it. If you want to know it's true, you have to slave together like us— He kissed me then, Sir."

Clerambault rose, and bending over the bandaged face, kissed the wounded man's rough cheek.

"Tell me something that I can do for you," he said.

"You are very good, Sir, but there's not much you can do now. I am so used up. No legs, and a broken arm. I'm no good,—what could I work at? Besides, it's not sure yet that I shall pull through. We'll have to leave it at

that. If I go out, good-bye. If not, can't do anything but wait. There are plenty of trains."

As Clerambault admired his patience, he repeated his refrain: "I've got the habit. There's no merit in being patient when there's nothing else to do. . . . A little more or less, what does it matter? . . . It's like life, this war is."

Clerambault saw that in his egotism he had asked the man nothing about himself. He did not even know his name.

"My name? It's a good fit for me,—Courtois Aimé is what they call me—Aimé, that's the Christian name, fine for an unlucky fellow like me, and Courtois on the top of it. Queer enough, isn't it? . . . I never had a family, came out of an Orphan Asylum; my foster-father, a farmer down in Champagne, offered to bring me up; and you can bet he did it! I had all the training I wanted; but anyhow it learned me what I had to expect. I've had all that was coming to me!"

Thereupon he told in a few brief dry phrases, without emotion, of the series of bad luck which had made up his life. Marriage with a girl as poor as himself—"hunger wedding thirst," as they say, sickness and death, the struggle with nature,—it would not be so bad if men would only help. . . . *Homo, homini . . . homo*. . . . All the social injustice weighs on the under dog. As he listened Clerambault could not keep down his indignation, but Aimé Courtois took it as a matter of course; that's the way it always has been, and always will be; some are born to suffer, others not. You can't have mountains without valleys. The war seemed perfectly idiotic to him, but he would not have lifted a finger to prevent it. He had in his way the fatalist passivity of the people, which hides itself, on Gallic soil, behind a veil of ironic carelessness. The "no use in getting in a sweat about it," of the trenches.

Then there is also that false pride of the French, who fear nothing so much as ridicule, and would risk death twenty times over for something they know to be absurd, rather than be laughed at for an act of unusual common-sense. "You might as well try to stop the lightning as talk against war." When it hails there is nothing to do but to cover over your cold-frames if you can, and when it's over go round and see how much is left of your crop. And they will keep on doing this until the next hailstorm, the next war, to the end of time. "No use getting in a sweat." . . . It would never occur to them that Man can change Man.

This stupid heroic resignation irritated Clerambault profoundly. The upper classes are charmed with it, no doubt, for they owe their existence to it,—but it makes a Danaïd's sieve of the human race, and its age-long effort, since all its courage, its virtues, and its labours, are spent in learning how to die. . . . But when he looked at the fragment of a man before him, his heart was pierced with an infinite pity. What could this wretched man do, symbol as he was, of the mutilated, sacrificed people? For so many centuries he has bled and suffered under our eyes, while we, his more fortunate brothers, have only encouraged him to persevere, throwing him some careless word of praise from a distance, which cost us nothing. What help have we ever given him? Nothing at all in action, and little enough in words. We owe to his sacrifices the leisure to think; but all the fruit of our thought we have kept for ourselves; we have not given him a taste of it. We are afraid of the light, of impudent opinion and the rulers of the hour who call to us saying: "Put it out! You who have the Light, hide it, if you wish to be pardoned. . . ." Oh, let us be cowards no more. For who will speak, if we do not? The others are gagged and must die without a word.

A wave of pain passed over the features of the wounded man. With eyes fixed on the ceiling, his big mouth twisted, his teeth obstinately clenched, he could say no more.—Clerambault went away, his mind was made up. The silence of this soldier on his bed of agony had brought him to a decision. He would speak.

PART THREE

CLERAMBABULT came back from the hospital, shut himself into his room, and began to write. His wife tried to come in, to discover what he was doing; it seemed as if the good woman had a suspicion, an intuition, rare with her, which gave her a sort of obscure fear of what her husband might be about to do, but he succeeded in keeping her away until he had finished. Ordinarily not a line of his was spared to his family; it was a pleasure to his simple-hearted, affectionate vanity, and a duty towards their love also, which none of them would have neglected. This time, however, he did neglect it, for reasons which he would not admit to himself, for though he was far from imagining the consequences of his act, he was afraid of their objections, he did not feel sure enough to expose himself to them, and so preferred to confront them with the accomplished fact.

His first word was a cry of self-accusation:

"FORGIVE US, YE DEAD!"

This public confession began with an inscription; a musical phrase of David's lament over the body of his son Absalom:

"Oh! Absalom my son, my son!"

I had a son whom I loved, and sent to his death. You Fathers of mourning Europe, millions of fathers, widowed of your sons, enemies or friends, I do not speak for myself only, but for you who are stained with their blood even as I am. You all speak by the voice of one of you,—my unhappy voice full of sorrow and repentance.

My son died, for yours, by yours.—How can I tell?—

like yours. I laid the blame on the enemy, and on the war, as you must also have done, but I see now that the chief criminal, the one whom I accuse, is myself. Yes, I am guilty; and that means you, and all of us. You must listen while I tell you what you know well enough, but do not want to hear.

My son was twenty years old when he fell in this war. Twenty years I had loved him, protected him from hunger, cold, and sickness; saved him from darkness of mind, ignorance, error, and all the pitfalls that lie in the shadows of life. But what did I do to defend him against this scourge which was coming upon us?

I was never one of those who compounded with the passions of jealous nationalities. I loved men, and their future brotherhood was a joy to me. Why then did I do nothing against the impending danger, against the fever that brooded within us, against the false peace which made ready to kill with a smile on its lips?

I was perhaps afraid to displease others, afraid of enmities; it is true I cared too much to love, above all to be loved. I feared to lose the good-will of those around me, however feeble and insipid such a feeling may be. It is a sort of play acted by ourselves and others. No one is deceived by it, since both sides shrink from the word which might crack the plaster and bring the house about our ears. There is an inward equivocation which fears to see clearly in itself, wants to make the best of everything, to reconcile old instincts and new beliefs, mutually destructive forces, like the ideas of Country and Humanity, War and Peace. . . . We are not sure which side to take; we lean first one way and then the other, like a see-saw; afraid of the effort needed to come to a decision and choose. What slothful cowardice is here! All whitewashed over with a comfortable faith in the goodness of things, which will, we think, settle themselves. And

we continue to look on, and glorify the impeccable course of Destiny, paying court to blind Force.

Failing us, other things—and other men—have chosen; and not till then did we understand our mistake, but it was so dreadful to admit it, and we were so unaccustomed to be honest, that we acted as if we were in sympathy with the crime. In proof of this sympathy we have given up our own sons whom we love with all our hearts, more than life—if we could but give our lives for theirs!—but not more than our pride, with which we try to veil the moral confusion, the empty darkness of mind and heart.

We will say nothing of those who still believe in the old idol; grim, envious, blood be-spattered as she is—the barbarous Country. These kill, sacrificing themselves and others, but at least they know what they do. But what of those who have ceased to believe (like me, alas! and you)? Their sons are sacrificed to a lie, for if you assert what you doubt, it is a falsehood, and they offer up their own children to prove this lie to themselves; and now that our beloved have died for it, far from confessing it, we hide our heads still deeper not to see what we have done. After our sons will come others, all the others, offered up for our untruth.

I for my part can bear it no longer, when I think of those who still live. Does it soothe my pain to inflict injury on others? Am I a savage of Homer's time that I should believe that the sorrow of my dead son will be appeased, and his craving for light satisfied, if I sprinkle the earth which covers him with the blood of other men's sons?—Are we at that stage still?—No, each new murder kills my son again, and heaps the heavy mud of crime over his grave. He was the future; if I would save the future, I must save him also, and rescue fathers to come from the agony that I endure. Come then, and help me! Cast out these falsehoods! Surely it is not for our sakes that men wage these combats between nations, this universal brigandage? What good is

it to us? A tree grows up straight and tall, stretching out branches around it, full of free-flowing sap; so is a man who labours calmly, and sees the slow development of the many-sided life in his veins fulfil itself in him and in his sons. Is not this the first law, the first of joys? Brothers of the world, which of you envies the others or would deprive them of this just happiness? What have we to do with the ambitions and rivalries, covetousness, and ills of the mind, which they dignify with the name of Patriotism? Our Country means you, Fathers and Sons. All our sons.—Come and save them!"

CLERAMBAULT asked no one's advice but as soon as he had written these pages he took them to the editor of a small socialist paper nearby. He came back much relieved, as he thought:

" That is off my mind. I have spoken out, at last." But in the following night, a weight on his heart told him that the burden was still there, heavier than ever. He roused himself.

" What have I done? "

He felt that he had been almost immodest to show his sacred sorrow to the public; and though he did not foresee the anger his article would provoke, he knew the lack of comprehension, the coarse comments, which are in themselves a profanation.

Days passed, and nothing happened. Silence. The appeal had fallen on the ear of an inattentive public, the publisher was little known, the pamphlet carelessly issued. There are none so deaf as those who will not hear, and the few readers who were attracted by Clerambault's name, merely glanced at the first lines, and threw it aside, thinking:

" The poor man's head has been turned by his sorrow,"— a good pretext for not wishing to upset their own balance.

A second article followed, in which Clerambault took a final leave of the bloody old fetish falsely called Country; or rather in opposition to the great flesh-eater, the she-wolf of Rome, on whose altar men are now offered up, he set the august Mother of all living, the universal Country:

TO HER WHOM WE HAVE LOVED

There can be nothing more bitter than to be parted from her whom one has loved. I lacerate my own heart when I tear Country from it;—dear, beautiful, and good, as she seemed! There are some ardent lovers so blinded that they can forget all the joy and love of former days, and see only the change in the loved one, and the harm that she has done them. If it were only possible for me to be like that! But I cannot; it is impossible for me to forget. I must see thee always as I loved thee, when I trusted, and saw in thee my guide and my best friend.—Oh, my Country! why hast thou deserted and betrayed me? If I were the only one to suffer, I could hide the sad disenchantment under the memory of my former affection; but I behold thy victims, these trusting devoted youths.—I see myself in them, as I was.—And how greatly thou hast deceived us! Thine was as the voice of fraternal love, thou calledst us, that we might all be united, all brothers,—no more isolation. To each was lent the strength of millions of others, and we were taught to love our sky, our soil, and the work of our hands, that in them we should love each other more, for thy sake. Now where have we been led? Did we unite to increase, and grow stronger to hate and destroy? We had known too much of these isolated hatreds in the past. Each had his load of evil thoughts, but at least we knew them to be evil. But now our souls are poisoned, since thou hast called these things sacred. . . .

Why these combats? To set us free? But thou hast made slaves of us. Our conscience is outraged, our happiness gone, our prosperity destroyed. What need have we of further conquests, when the land of our fathers has grown too wide for their children? Is it to satisfy the greed of some among us, and can it be that the Country will fill their maw at the cost of public misfortune?

Patriotism, sold to the rich, to those who traffic in the blood of souls and of nations! Partner and accomplice, cov-

ering your villainies with an heroic mantle, look to thyself! The hour is coming when the peoples will shake off the vermin, the gods and masters by whom they have been deceived. They will drive out the guilty from among them. I shall strike straight at the Head whose shadow is over us all.—Thou who sittest impassively on thy throne, while multitudes slaughter each other in thy name, thou whom they worship while they hate their fellow-man, thou who hast pleasure in the bloody orgies of the nations, Goddess of prey, Anti-Christ, hovering over these butcheries with thy spread wings, and hawk's talons;—who will tear thee from our heaven? Who will give us back the sun, and our love for our brothers? . . . I am alone, and have but my voice, which will soon be silent, but before I disappear, hear my cry: "Thou wilt fall, Tyrant, for humanity must live. The time will come when men will break this yoke of death and falsehood;—that time is near, it is at hand."

THE LOVED ONE'S REPLY

My son, your words are like stones that a child throws at the sky which he cannot reach; they will fall back on your own head. She whom you insult, who has usurped my name, is an idol carved by yourself, in your own image, not in mine. The true Country is that of the Father. She belongs to all, and embraces everyone.—It is not her fault if you have brought her down to your own level. . . . Unhappy creatures, who sully your gods; there is not a lofty idea that you have not tarnished. You turn the good that is brought you, into poison, and scorch yourselves with the very light that shines on you. I came among you to bring warmth to your loneliness; I brought your shivering souls together in a flock, and bound your scattered weakness in sheaves of arrows. I am brotherly love, the great Communion; and you destroy your fellows in my name, fools that you are! . . .

For ages I have toiled to deliver you from the chains of bestiality, to free you from your hard egotism. On the road

of Time you advance by toil and sweat; provinces and nations are the military milestones which mark your resting-places. Your weakness alone created them. Before I can lead you farther, I must wait till you have taken breath; you have so little strength of lungs or heart, that you have made virtues of your weaknesses. You admire your heroes for the distance they went before they dropped exhausted; not because they were the first to reach those limits. And when you have come without difficulty to the spot where these forerunners stopped, you think yourselves heroes in your turn.

What have these shadows of the past to do with us today? Bayard, Joan of Arc, we have no further need of heroism like theirs, knights and martyrs of a dead cause. We want apostles of the future, great hearts that will give themselves for a larger country, a higher ideal. Forward then; cross the old frontiers, and if you must still use these crutches, to help your lameness, thrust the barriers back to the doors of the East, the confines of Europe, until at last step by step you reach the end, and men encircle the globe, each holding by the other's hand. Before you insult me, poor little author, descend into your own heart, examine yourself. The gift of speech was given you to guide your people, and you have used it to deceive yourself and lead them astray. You have added to their error instead of saving them, even to the point that you have laid your own son whom you loved on the altar of your untruth.

Now at least dare to show to others the ruin that you are, and say: "See what I am, and take warning!" . . . Go! And may your misfortunes save those that come after from the same fate! Dare to speak, and cry out to them: "You are mad, peoples of the earth; instead of defending your Country, you are killing her. You *are your Country and the enemies are your brothers. Millions of God's creatures, love one another.*

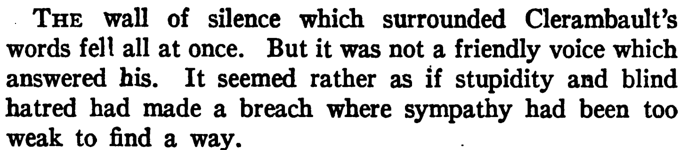
THE same silence as before seemed to swallow up this last cry. Clerambault lived outside of popular circles where he would have found the warm sympathy of simple, healthy minds. Not the slightest echo of his thought came to him.

He knew that he was not really alone, though he seemed so. Two apparently contradictory sentiments—his modesty and his faith—united to say to him: "What you thought, others have thought also; you are too small, this truth is too great, to exist only in you. The light that your weak eyes have seen has shone also for others. See where now the Great Bear inclines to the horizon,—millions of eyes are looking at it, perhaps; but you cannot see them, only the far-off light makes a bond between their sight and yours."

The solitude of the mind is only a painful delusion; it has no real existence, for even the most independent of us are members of a spiritual family. This community of spirit has no relation to time or space; its elements are dispersed among all peoples and all ages. Conservatives see them in the past, but the revolutionists and the persecuted look to the future for them. Past and future are not less real than the immediate present, which is a wall beyond which the calm eyes of the flock can see nothing. The present itself is not what the arbitrary divisions of states, nations, and religions would have us believe. In our time humanity is a bazaar of ideas, unsorted and thrown together in a heap, with hastily constructed partitions between them, so that brothers are separated from brothers, and thrown in with strangers. Every country has swallowed up different races, not formed to think and act together; so that each

one of these spiritual families, or families-in-law, which we call nations, comprises elements which in fact form part of different groups, past, present, or future. Since these cannot be destroyed, they are oppressed; they can escape destruction only by some subterfuge, apparent submission, inward rebellion, or flight and voluntary exile. They are *Heimatlos*. To reproach them for lack of patriotism is to blame Irishmen and Poles for their resistance to English and Prussian absorption. No matter where they are, men remain loyal to their true country. You who pretend that the object of this war is to give the right of self-determination to all peoples, when will you restore this right to the great Republic of free souls dispersed over the whole world?

However cut off from the world, Clerambault knew that this Republic existed. Like the Rome of Sertorius, it dwelt in him, and though they may be unknown each to the other, it dwells in every man to whom it is the true Country.



THE wall of silence which surrounded Clerambault's words fell all at once. But it was not a friendly voice which answered his. It seemed rather as if stupidity and blind hatred had made a breach where sympathy had been too weak to find a way.

Several weeks had passed and Clerambault was thinking of a new publication, when, one morning, Leo Camus burst noisily into his room. He was blue with rage, as with the most tragic expression he held up a newspaper before Clerambault's eyes:

"Read that!" he commanded, and standing behind his brother-in-law as he read, he went on:

"What does the beastly thing mean?"

Clerambault was dismayed to find himself stabbed by what he had believed to be a friendly hand. A well-known writer, a colleague of Perrotin's, a serious honourable man, and one always on good terms with him, had denounced him publicly and without hesitation. Though he had known Clerambault long enough to have no doubt as to the purity of his intentions, he held him up as a man dishonoured. An historian, well used to the manipulation of text, he seized upon detached phrases of Clerambault's pamphlet and brandished them as an act of treason. A personal letter would not have satisfied his virtuous indignation; he chose a loud "yellow journal," a laboratory of blackmail despised by a million Frenchmen, who nevertheless swallowed all its humbug with open mouths.

"I can't believe it," stammered Clerambault, who felt helpless before this unexpected hostility.

"There is no time to be lost," declared Camus, "you must answer."

" Answer? But what can I say? "

" The first thing, of course, is to deny it as a base invention."

" But it is not an invention," said Clerambault, looking Camus in the face. It was the turn of the latter to look as if he had been struck by lightning.

" You say it is not,—not? " he stammered.

" I wrote the pamphlet," said Clerambault, " but the meaning has been distorted by this article."

Camus could not wait for the end of the sentence, but began to howl: " You wrote a thing like that! . . . You, a man like you! "

Clerambault tried to calm his brother-in-law, begging him not to judge until he knew all; but Camus would do nothing but shout, calling him crazy, and screaming: " I don't know anything about all that. Have you written against the war, or the country. Yes, or no? "

" I wrote that war is a crime, and that all countries are stained by it. . . ."

Without allowing Clerambault to explain himself farther, Camus sprang at him, as if he meant to shake him by the collar; but restraining himself, he hissed in his face that he was the criminal, and deserved to be tried by court-martial at once.

The raised voices brought the servant to listen at the door, and Madame Clerambault ran in, trying to appease her brother, in a high key. Clerambault volunteered to read the obnoxious pamphlet to Camus, but in vain, as he refused furiously, declaring that the papers had told him all he wanted to know about such filth. (He said all papers were liars, but acted on their falsehoods, none the less.) Then, in a magisterial tone, he called on Clerambault to sit down and write on the spot a public recantation. Clerambault shrugged his shoulders, saying that he was accountable to nothing but his own conscience—that he was free.

"No!" roared Camus.

"Do you mean that I am not free to say what I think?"

"You are not free, you have no right to say such things," cried the exasperated Camus. "Your country has claims on you, and your family first of all. They ought to shut you up."

He insisted that the letter should be written that very moment, but Clerambault simply turned his back on him. So he left, banging the door after him, and vowing that he would never set foot there again, that all was over between them.

After this poor Clerambault had to submit to a string of questions from his wife who, without knowing what he had done, lamented his imprudence and asked with tears: "Why, why he had not kept silent? Had they not trouble enough? What was this mania he had for talking? And particularly for talking differently from other people?"

While this was going on, Rosine came back from an errand, and Clerambault appealed to her, telling her in a confused manner of the painful scene that had just taken place, and begging her to sit down there by his table and let him read the article to her. Without even taking off her hat and gloves, Rosine did sit down near him, and listened sensibly, sweetly, and when he had done, kissed him and said:

"Yes, I think it's fine,—but, dear Papa, why did you do it?" Clerambault was completely taken aback.

"What? You ask why I did it? Don't you think it is right?"

"I don't know. Yes, I believe it must be right since you say so. . . . But perhaps it was not necessary to write it. . . ."

"Not necessary? But if it is right, it must be necessary."

"But if it makes such a fuss!"

"That is no reason against it."

"But why stir people up?"

"Look here, my little girl, you think as I do about this, do you not?"

"Yes, Papa, I suppose so. . . ."

"You only suppose? . . . Come now, you detest the war, as I do, and wish it were over; everything that I wrote there I have said to you, and you agreed. . . ."

"Yes, Papa."

"Then you think I am right?"

"Yes, Papa." She put her arms around his neck. "but we don't have to write everything that we think."

Clerambault, much depressed, tried to explain what seemed so evident to him. Rosine listened, and answered quietly, but it was clear that she did not understand. When he had finished, she kissed him again and said:

"I have told you what I think, Papa, but it is not for me to judge. You know much better than I."

With that she went into her room, smiling at her father, and not in the least suspecting that she had just taken away from him his greatest support.

THIS abusive attack was not the only one, for when the bell was once tied on the cat it never ceased to ring. However, the noise would have been drowned in the general tumult, if it had not been for a persistent voice which led the chorus of malignity against Clerambault.

Unhappily it was the voice of one of his oldest friends, the author Octave Bertin; for they had been school-fellows at the Lycée Henri IV. Bertin, a little Parisian, quick-witted, elegant, and precocious, had welcomed the awkward enthusiastic advances of the overgrown youth fresh from the country,—ungainly in body and mind, his clothes always too short for his long legs and arms, a mixture of innocence, simplicity, ignorance, and bad taste, always emphatic, with overflowing spirits, yet capable of the most original sallies, and striking images. None of this had escaped the sharp malicious eye of young Bertin; neither Clerambault's absurdities nor the treasures of his mind, and after thinking him over he had decided to make a friend of him. Clerambault's unfeigned admiration had something to do with this decision. For several years they shared the superabundance of their youthful ideas. Both dreamed of being artists; they read their literary attempts to each other, and engaged in interminable discussions, in which Bertin always had the upper hand. He was apt to be first in everything. Clerambault never thought of contesting his superiority; he was much more likely to use his fists to convince anyone who denied it. He stood in open-mouthed admiration before his brilliant friend, who won all the University prizes without seeming to work for them, and whom his teachers thought destined to the highest honours—official and academic, of course.

Bertin was of the same mind as his teachers; he was in

haste to succeed, and believed that the fruit of triumph has more flavour when one's teeth are young enough to bite into it. He had scarcely left the University when he found means to publish in a great Parisian review a series of essays which immediately brought him to the notice of the general public. And without pausing to take breath, he produced one after another a novel in the style of d'Annunzio, a comedy in Rostand's vein, a book on love, another on reforms in the Constitution, a study of Modernism, a monograph on Sarah Bernhardt, and, finally, the "Dialogues of the Living." The sarcastic but measured spirit of this last work obtained for him the position of column writer on one of the leading dailies. Having thus entered journalism he stayed in the profession, and became one of the ornaments of the Paris of Letters, while Clerambault's name was still unknown. The latter had been slow in gaining the mastery over his inward resources, and was so occupied in struggles with himself that he had no time for the conquest of the public. His first works, which were published with difficulty, were not read by more than a dozen people. It is only fair to Bertin to say that he was one of the dozen, and that he appreciated Clerambault's talents. He was even ready to say so, when opportunity served, and as long as Clerambault was unknown, he took pleasure in defending him. It is true that he would sometimes add a friendly and patronising piece of advice to his praises, which, if Clerambault did not always follow, he received with the old affectionate respect.

In a little while Clerambault became known, and even celebrated. Bertin, somewhat surprised, sincerely pleased by his friend's success—the least bit vexed by it, perhaps—intimated that he thought it exaggerated, and that the better Clerambault was the obscure Clerambault before his reputation was made. He would even undertake to prove this to Clerambault himself, sometimes, who neither agreed nor dis-

agreed. For how could he tell, who thought very little about it, his head being always full of some new work? The two old comrades remained on excellent terms, but little by little they began to see less of one another.

The war had made Bertin a furious jingo. In the old days at school he used to scandalise Clerambault's provincial mind by his impudent disrespect for all values, political and social—country, morality, and religion. In his literary works he continued to parade his anarchism, but in a sceptical, worldly, bored sort of manner which was to the taste of his rich clientèle. Now, before this clientèle and the rest of those who purveyed to it, his brethren of the popular press and theatres, the contemptible Parny's and Crebillon Jr.'s of the day, he suddenly assumed the attitude of Brutus immolating his sons. It is true he himself had none, but perhaps that was a regret to him.

Clerambault did not dream of finding fault with him for these opinions; but he did not dream either that his old friend and amoralist would come out against him as the defender of his outraged country. But was it a question simply of his country?

There was a personal note in the furious diatribe that Bertin hurled at him that Clerambault could not understand. In the general mental confusion, Bertin, naturally shocked by Clerambault's ideas, might have remonstrated with him frankly, face to face; but without any warning, he began by a public denunciation. On the first page of his paper appeared an article of the utmost virulence; he attacked, not only his ideas, but his character, speaking of Clerambault's tragic struggle with his conscience as an attack of literary megalomania, brought on by undeserved success. It seemed as if he expressly chose words likely to wound Clerambault, and he ended by summoning him to retract his errors in a tone of the most insulting superiority.

The violence of this article, from so well-known an author, made an event in Paris of the "Clerambault Case." It occupied the reporters for more than a week, a long time for these feather-headed gentry. Hardly anyone read what Clerambault had actually written; it was not worth while. Bertin had read it, and newspaper men do not make a practice of taking unnecessary trouble; besides it was not a question of reading, but of judgment. A strange sort of Sacred Union was formed over Clerambault; clericals and Jacobins came together to condemn him, and the man whom they admired yesterday was dragged in the mud today. The national poet became at once a public enemy, and all the myrmidons of the press attacked him with heroic invective. The greater number of them united bad faith with a remarkable ignorance. Very few knew Clerambault's works, they scarcely knew his name or the titles of his books, but that no more kept them from disparaging him now than it had hindered them from praising him when he was the fashion. Now, in their eyes, everything that he had written was tainted with "bochism," though all their quotations were inexact. In the excitement of his investigation, one of them foisted upon Clerambault the authorship of another man's book, the author of which, pale with fright, protested with indignation, dissociating himself entirely from his dangerous fellow-author. Uneasy at their intimacy with Clerambault, some of his friends did not wait to have it recalled, but met it halfway, writing "open letters," to which the papers gave a conspicuous place. Some, like Bertin, coupled their public censure with a demand that he should confess himself in the wrong, and others, less considerate, cast him off in the bitterest and most insulting terms. Clerambault was crushed by all this animosity; it could not arise solely from his articles, it must have been long dormant in the hearts of these men. And why so much hidden hatred?—What had he done to them?

. . . A successful artist does not suspect that besides the smiles of those around there are also teeth, only waiting for the opportunity to bite.

Clerambault did his best to conceal the insults in the papers from his wife. Like a schoolboy trying to spirit away his bad marks he watched for the post so as to suppress the obnoxious sheets, but at last their venom seemed to poison the very air. Among their friends in society, Madame Clerambault and Rosine had to bear many painful allusions, small affronts, even insults. With the instinct of justice which characterises the human beast, and especially the female, they were held responsible for Clerambault's ideas, though his wife and daughter knew little of them and disapproved what they knew. (Their critics did not understand them either.) The more polite were reticent, taking pains not to mention Clerambault's name, or ask after him,—you don't speak of ropes, you know, in the house of a man who has been hanged. . . . And this calculated silence was worse than open abuse. You would have said that Clerambault had done something dishonest or immodest. Madame Clerambault would come back full of bitterness, and Rosine suffered too, though she pretended not to mind. One day, a friend, whom they met in the street, crossed to the other side, turning away her head so as to avoid bowing to them; and Rosine was excluded from a benevolent society where she had worked hard for years.

Women were particularly active in this patriotic reprobation. Clerambault's appeal for reconciliation and pardon had no more violent opponents—and it was the same everywhere. The tyranny of public opinion is an engine of oppression, invented by the modern State, and much more despotic than itself. In times of war certain women have proved its most ferocious instruments. Bertrand Russell cites the case of an unfortunate man, conductor on a tram-

way, married, with children, and honourably discharged from the army, who killed himself on account of the insults and persecutions of the women of Middlesex. In all countries, poor wretches like him have been pursued, crazed, driven to death, by these war-maddened Bacchantes. This ought not to surprise us; if we have not foreseen this madness, it is because we, like Clerambault hitherto, have lived on comfortable accepted opinions and idealisations. In spite of the efforts of woman to approximate the fallacious ideal imagined by man for his pleasure and tranquillity, the woman of the present day, weak, cut-off, trimmed into shape as she is, comes much closer than man to the primitive earth. She is at the source of our instincts, and more richly endowed with forces, which are neither moral nor immoral but simply animal. If love is her chief function, it is not the passion sublimated by reason but love in the raw state, splendidly blind, mingling selfishness and sacrifice, equally irresponsible, and both subservient to the deep purposes of the race. The tender, flowery embellishments with which the couple always try to veil the forces that affright them, are like arches of tropical vines over a rushing stream; their object is to deceive. Man could not bear life if his feeble soul saw the great forces, as they are, that carry him along.

His ingenious cowardice strives to adapt them mentally to his weakness; he lies about love, about hatred, about his gods, and above all he is false about woman and about Country. If the naked truth were shown to him, he would fear to fall into convulsions, and so he substitutes the pale chromos of his idealism. The war had broken through the thin disguise, and Clerambault saw the cruel beast without the mantle of feline courtesy in which civilisation drapes itself.

Among Clerambault's former friends, the most tolerant were those belonging to the political world. Deputies, Min-

isters, past or future; accustomed to drive the human flock, they know just what it is worth. Clerambault's daring seemed merely foolish to them. What they thought in their hearts was twenty times worse, but they thought it silly to speak it, dangerous to write it, more dangerous still to answer it. You make a thing known when you attack it, and condemnation only gives it greater importance. Their best advice would have been to keep silent about these unlucky articles, which the sleepy, stumbling public would have neglected if left to itself. This was the course usually followed by Germany during the war; if the authorities did not see their way clear to suppress rebellious writers, they hid them under some flowery humbug.

The political spirit of the French Democracy, however, is more outspoken and more narrow-minded; silence is unknown to it, and far from concealing its hatreds, it spits them forth from the house-tops. Like that of Rude, French liberty opens her mouth and bawls. Anyone who differs from her opinion of the moment is declared a traitor forthwith; there are always some yellow journals to tell at what price the independent voice was bought, and twenty fanatics to stir up the crowd against it. Once started, there is nothing to do but wait until the fit has passed off; but in the meantime, look out for yourself! Prudent folks join in the hue and cry from a safe distance.

The editor of the magazine which had been proud to publish Clerambault's poems for years whispered to him that all this row was absurd—that there was really nothing in his "case," but that on account of his subscribers he should have to scuttle him. He was awfully sorry . . . hoped there was no hard feeling? . . . In short, without being rude, he made the whole thing look ridiculous.

Alas for human nature! Even Perrotin laughed at Clerambault in a brilliantly sarcastic interview, and considered himself to be still his friend at bottom.

In his own house Clerambault now found himself without support. His old helpmate, who for thirty years had seen only through his eyes, repeating his words without even understanding them, was now afraid, indignant at what he had written, reproaching him bitterly for the scandal, the harm done to the name of the family, to the memory of his dead son, to the sacred cause of vengeance, to his Country.

Rosine was always loving, but she had ceased to understand him. A woman's mind makes but few demands, if her heart is satisfied; so it was enough for her that her father was no longer one of the haters, that he remained compassionate and kind. She did not want him to translate his sentiments into theories, nor above all, to proclaim them. She had much affectionate common-sense, and as long as matters of feeling were safe, she did not care for the rest, not understanding the inflexible exigence of logic which pushes a man to the utmost consequences of his faith.

She had ceased to understand, and her hour had passed—the time when, without knowing it, she had accepted and fulfilled a maternal mission towards her father. When he was weak, broken, and uncertain, she had sheltered him under her wing, rescued his conscience, and given back to him the torch which he had let fall from his hand. Now her part was accomplished, she was once more the loving "little daughter" somewhat in the shade, who looks on at the great events of life with eyes that are almost indifferent, and in the depths of her soul treasured devoutly the afterglow of the wonderful hour through which she had lived—all uncomprehending.

It was about this time that a young man home on leave came to see Clerambault. Daniel Favre was a friend of the family, an engineer like his father before him. He had long been an admirer of Clerambault, for his keen intelligence was not limited to his profession; indeed the extended flights of modern science have brought his domain close to that of poetry, it is itself the greatest of poems. Daniel was an enthusiastic reader of Clerambault's writings. They corresponded affectionately, knew each other's families, and the young man was a frequent visitor, perhaps not solely for the pleasure of conversing with the poet. He was a nice fellow, about thirty years old, tall, well set-up, with good features, a timid smile, and eyes which looked startlingly light in his sunburnt face. They were all glad to see him, and Clerambault was not the only member of the family who enjoyed his visits. David might easily have been assigned to duty in a munitions factory, but he had applied for a dangerous post at the Front, where he had quickly been promoted to the rank of Lieutenant. Having a few days in town, he went to see Clerambault.

Madame Clerambault and Rosine were out, so the poet was alone, and welcomed his young friend with delight, but Daniel responded awkwardly, answering questions somewhat at random, and at last abruptly brought up the subject which he had at heart. He said that he had heard talk at the front of Clerambault's articles, and he felt very badly. People said—they made out that—well, he had heard severe things about them; he knew people were often unjust, but he had come—here he pressed Clerambault's hand in a timid friendly way—he had come to entreat him not to desert all those who loved him. He re-

minded him of the devotion that had inspired the poet who had celebrated the traditions of French soil and the glories of the race. . . . " In this hour of trial," he implored, " stand by us."

" I have never been closer to you than now," answered Clerambault, and he added:

" You say that people blame what I have written. Dear boy, what do you think of it yourself? "

" I confess I have not read it," said Daniel. " I did not want to, for fear that it might disturb my affection for you, or hinder me in my duty."

" Your faith cannot be very strong, if a few lines of print can shake it."

" My convictions are firm enough," said Daniel, a little miffed, " but there are certain things which it is wisest not to discuss."

" That is something that I should not have expected to hear from a scientific man," said Clerambault. " The truth can lose nothing by discussion."

" Truth, no, but love—love of country."

" My dear Daniel, you go farther than I. I do not place truth in opposition to love of country, on the contrary I endeavour to reconcile them."

Daniel tried to cut the matter short.

" The country is not a subject for discussion."

" Is it an article of faith? "

" You know I do not believe in religions," protested Daniel. " I have no faith in any of them. But that is the very reason. What should we have left on earth if it were not for our country? "

" I think that there are many great and beautiful things in the world, and Country is only one of them; but I am not discussing the love, but the way of loving."

" There is only one," said Daniel.

" And what is that? "

"We must obey."

"The ancient symbol, Love with bandaged eyes; I only want to open them."

"No, no, let us alone. It is hard enough already. Don't make it any worse for us." In a few phrases, temperate, yet broken by emotion, Daniel brought up the terrible picture of the weeks that he had spent in the trenches; the disgust and the horror of what he had borne himself, the suffering he had seen in others, had inflicted on them.

"But, my dear fellow, if you see this shameful thing, why not try to prevent it?"

"Because it is impossible."

"To be sure of that, you might at least make the attempt."

"The conflict between men is the law of Nature. Kill or be killed. So be it."

"And can it never be changed?"

"No, never," said Daniel, in a tone of sad obstinacy, "it is the law."

There are some scientific men from whom science seems to hide the truth it contains, so that they cannot see reality at the bottom of the net. They embrace the whole field that has been discovered, but would think it impossible and even ridiculous to enlarge it beyond the limits already traced by reason. They only believe in a progress that is chained to the inside of the enclosure. Clerambault knew only too well the supercilious smile with which the ideas of inventors are put aside by learned men from the official schools. There are certain forms of science which accord perfectly with docility. David's manner showed no irony; it expressed rather a stoical, baffled kind of melancholy. In abstract questions he did not lack courage of thought, but when faced with the facts of life he was a mixture, or rather a succession, of timidity and stiffness, diffident modesty, and firmness of conviction. In short he was a man,

like other men, complex and contradictory, not all in one piece. The trouble is that, in an intellectual and a man of science, the pieces lap over one another and the joinings show.

Clerambault sat silent for a few moments, and then began to utter the thoughts that had passed through his mind. "Nevertheless," said he, "the results of science itself are changeful. For the last twenty years all our conceptions of chemistry and physiology have been going through a crisis which has altered and made them much more fruitful. Why should not the so-called laws which regulate human society—or rather the state of chronic brigandage among nations—why should not they also be changed? Is there no place in your mind for the hope of a higher future?"

"We could not go on at all," said Daniel, "if we had not the hope of establishing a new order more just and humane. Many of my comrades hope through this war to put an end to all wars. I have not that confidence, and do not go so far as that; but I do know certainly that our France is in danger, and that if she is conquered, humanity will fall with her."

"The defeat of any people is that of humanity, for we are all necessary, and the union of all nations would be the only true victory. Any other ruins the victors as well as the vanquished. Every day that this war lasts the precious blood of France is shed, and she runs great risk of permanent exhaustion."

Daniel stopped him with a gesture of irritation and pain. Oh, he knew too well . . . no one better than he, that France was dying each day from her heroic effort. That the pick of her youth, her strength, her intelligence, the vital sap of the race, was pouring out in torrents, and with it the wealth, the labour, the credit of the people of France. France, bleeding at every vein, would follow the path that Spain had trod four centuries ago, the path that

led to the deserts of the Escurial. Yes, but let no one speak to him of a peace that would put an end to this agony until the adversary was totally crushed; no one ought to respond to the advances that Germany was then making—they ought not to be considered, or even mentioned. And then, like the politicians, the generals, the journalists, and millions of poor creatures who repeat at the top of their voices the lesson taught them, David cried: "To the last man!"

Clerambault looked at him with affectionate pity. Poor boy! brave, yet so timid that he shrank from the thought of discussing the dogmas of which he was the victim. His scientific mind dared not revolt against the stupidity of this bloody game, where death for France as well as for Germany—perhaps more than for Germany, was the stake.

Yes, he did revolt, but would not admit it to himself. He tried again to influence Clerambault: "Your ideas perhaps are right and true, but this is not the time . . . not now. In twenty, or even fifty years. We must first conquer, finish our task, found the freedom of the world, the brotherhood of men, on the enduring victory of France."

Poor Daniel! Can he not see that, even at the best, the victory is doomed to be tarnished by excesses, and that then it will be the turn of the vanquished to set their minds on a frantic revenge and a just victory? Each nation desires the end of wars through its own triumph, and from one such victory to another humanity will go down to its defeat.

As Daniel stood up to go he pressed Clerambault's hands and reminded him with much feeling of his poem where, in the heroic words of Beethoven, he exalted the suffering out of which joy is born. . . . "*Durch Leiden Freude.*" He sighed.

"Ah! how well they understand. . . . We sing of suffer-

ing and our deliverance, but they are enamoured of it. And now our hymn of deliverance will become a song of oppression for other men. . . ."

Clerambault could not answer, he had a real love for this young man, one of those who sacrificed themselves for the war, knowing well that they had nothing to gain; and the greater their sacrifices, the stronger their faith. Blessings on them! But if only they would consent not to immolate all mankind on the same altar. . . .

ROSINE came in just as Clerambault and Daniel reached the door of the apartment; she started with pleasure at the sight of the visitor, and Daniel's face lighted up also. Clerambault could not help noticing the sudden gaiety of the two young people. Rosine urged Daniel to come in again for a few moments and talk to her a little; Daniel hesitated, did come back, but refused to sit down, and in a constrained way made a vague excuse for going away. Clerambault, who guessed what was passing in his daughter's heart, begged him to promise that he would come at least once more before the end of his leave. Daniel, much embarrassed, said no, at first, then yes, without fixing a time, and at last, on being urged by Clerambault, he did say when they might expect him, and took leave, but his manner was still rather cool. Rosine stood there, absorbed. She looked troubled, but when her father smiled at her, she came quickly and kissed him.

The day he had fixed came and went, but no Daniel appeared; they waited for him the next day and the one after that. He had gone back to the Front. A few days later, Clerambault persuaded his wife to go with Rosine to see Daniel's parents. The icy coldness with which they were received just stopped short of offence. Madame Clerambault came home, vowing that as long as she lived she would never set foot again in that house; it was all Rosine could do to restrain her tears.

The following week a letter arrived from Daniel to Clerambault. Though he seemed a little shamefaced about his attitude and that of his parents, he tried rather to explain, than to apologise for it. He spoke of the ties of admiration, respect and friendship which united him to Clerambault,

and alluded discreetly to the hope that he had formed of one day becoming closer yet; but he added that Clerambault had disturbed these dreams of the future by the regrettable position that he had seen fit to adopt in the life and death crisis through which the country was now passing, a position rendered worse by the wide publicity given to Clerambault's words. These words, little understood perhaps, but certainly imprudent, had raised a storm of opposition on account of their almost sacrilegious character; the feeling of indignation was unanimous among the men at the front, as well as in the circle of friends at home. His parents knew what his hope had been, but they now absolutely refused to allow it, and in spite of the pain this caused him, he did not feel it right to disregard these scruples, springing as they did from a profound devotion to the wounded country. An officer who had the honour to offer his life for France could not think of a union which would be regarded as his adhesion to these unfortunate theories; public opinion would condemn it. Such a view would be unjust, undoubtedly, but it is a thing that must always be reckoned with; the opinion of a whole people is respectable, no matter how extreme and unfair it may appear, and Clerambault had made a grave mistake in trying to brave it. Daniel entreated him to acknowledge this mistake, and try to rectify, if possible efface, the deplorable effect produced by articles written in a different key. He urged this upon him as a duty—towards his country and himself—letting it be understood that it was also a duty towards one dear to both of them. In ending his letter he brought forward other considerations where the word opinion constantly recurred, so as at last to take the place of reason and conscience.

As Clerambault read he smiled, recalling a scene of Spitteler's. The king Epimetheus was a man of firm conscience, but when the time came to put it to the proof, he could

not lay his hand upon it, saw it trying to escape, ran after it, and finally threw himself flat on his stomach to look for it under the bed. Clerambault reflected that one might be a hero under the fire of the enemy, but a timid small boy before the opinion of his fellow-citizens.

He showed the letter to Rosine, and in spite of the partiality of love, she was hurt that her friend should have wished to do violence to her father's convictions. Her conclusion was that Daniel did not love her enough; and she said that her own feeling was not sufficiently strong to endure such exactions; even if Clerambault had been willing to yield, she would not have consented to such an injustice; whereupon she kissed her father, tried to laugh bravely, and to forget her cruel disappointment.

A glimpse of happiness, however, is not so easily forgotten, especially if there remains a faint chance of its renewal. She thought of it constantly, and after a time Clerambault felt that she was growing away from him. It is difficult not to feel bitterly towards those for whom we sacrifice ourselves, and in spite of herself Rosine held her father responsible for her lost happiness.

A STRANGE phenomenon now made itself apparent in Clerambault's mind; he was cast down but strengthened at the same time. He suffered because he had spoken, and yet he felt that he should speak again, for he had ceased to belong to himself. His written word held and constrained him; he was bound by his thought as soon as it was published. "That which the fountain sends forth returns again to the fountain." Born in an hour of mental exaltation, his work prolonged and reproduced itself in his mind, which would otherwise have fallen exhausted. An artist's thought is the ray of light from the depths, the best of himself, the most enduring; it supports his lower nature. Man, whether he likes it or not, leans on his works and is led by them. They have an existence outside of his own, and so restore his lost vigour, recall him to his duty, guide and command him. Clerambault would have preferred to remain silent, but he wrote once more.

This time he did not go very far. "Tremble, poor carcass, you know where I am going to drag you," said Turenne to his body before the battle. The carcass of Clerambault was not more courageous, though the conflict to which it was driven was of a humbler sort. It was none the less hard, for he was alone with no army at his back. As he watched by his arms, he was a pitiable spectacle in his own eyes. He saw himself, an ordinary man, of a timid, rather cowardly, disposition, depending greatly on the affection and approval of others. It was terribly painful to break these ties, to meet the hatred of others halfway. . . . Was he strong enough to resist? . . . All his doubts came back upon him. . . . What forced him to speak? Who

would listen to him, and what good would it do? Did not the wisest people set him the example of silence?

Nevertheless his brain was firm, and continued to dictate to him what he should write; his hand also wrote it down without the alteration of a word. There seemed to be two men in him; one who threw himself on the ground in terror, and cried: "I will not fight," and the other who dragged him along by the collar, without trying to persuade him, saying simply: "Yes, you will."

It would be praising him too highly to say that he acted in this manner through bravery; he felt that he could not act otherwise, even if he had wished to stop; something forced him to go on, to speak. . . . It was his "mission." He did not understand it, did not know why he was chosen, he, the poet of tenderness, made for a calm, peaceful life, free from sacrifices; while other men—strong, war-like, good fighters with the souls of athletes—remained unemployed. But it was of no use to dispute it; the word had gone forth, and there was nothing for it but to obey.

When the stronger of his two souls had once asserted itself, the duality of his nature led him to yield to it entirely. A more normal man would have tried to unite them, or combine them, or find some kind of compromise to satisfy the demands of the one and the prudence of the other; but with Clerambault it was everything or nothing. Whether he liked it or not, once he had chosen his road, he followed it straight before him; and the same causes that had made him accept absolutely the views of those around him, drove him to cast off every consideration now that he had begun to see the falsehoods which had deceived him. If he had been less misled, he would not have unmasked them.

Thus the brave-man-in-spite-of-himself set off like Œdipus for the fight with the Sphinx, Country, who awaited him at the crossroads.

BERTIN's attack drew the attention of several politicians to Clerambault; they belonged to the extreme Left, and found it difficult to conciliate the opposition to the Government—their reason for existence—with the Sacred Union formed against the enemies' invasion.

They republished the first two articles in a socialist paper which was then balancing itself between contradictions; opposing the war, and at the same time voting for credits. You could see in its pages eloquent statements of internationalism side by side with the appeals of ministers who were preaching a nationalist policy. In this see-saw Clerambault's lightly lyrical pages, where the attack on the idea of Country was made with caution, and the criticism covered up by devotion, would have been taken as a harmless platonic protestation. Unfortunately, the teeth of censure had fastened themselves upon some phrases, with the tenacity of ants; they might have escaped notice in the general distraction of thought, if it had not been for this.

In the article addressed "*To Her whom We have Loved,*" the word country appears the first time coupled with an invocation to love. The critics kept this, but cut it out when it occurred further on dissociated from such flattering expressions. The word, awkwardly concealed under this extinguisher, shone all the more brightly in the mind of the reader—but this they were too dull to perceive, and great importance was thus given to writings which had not much in themselves. It must be added that all minds were then in a passive state, in which the slightest word of liberal humanitarianism took on an extraordinary importance, particularly if signed by a well-known name.

The "*Pardon Asked of the Dead,*" was more effective than the other ever could be; its sadness touched the mass of simple hearts, to whom the war was agony. The authorities had been indifferent up to now, but at the first hint of this they tried to put a stop to it. They had sense enough to know that rigorous measures against Clerambault would be a mistake, but they could put pressure on the paper through influence behind the scenes. An opposition to the writer showed itself on the staff of the paper. Naturally they did not blame the internationalism of his views; they merely stigmatised it as *bourgeois* sentimentality.

Clerambault furnished them with fresh arguments by a new article, where his aversion to war seemed incidentally to condemn revolution as well. Poets are proverbially bad politicians.

It was a reply to "*The Appeal to the Dead,*" that Barrès, like an owl perched on a cypress in a graveyard, had wailed forth.

TO THE LIVING

Death rules the world. You that are living, rise and shake off the yoke! It is not enough that the nations are destroyed. They are bidden to glorify Death, to march towards it with songs; they are expected to admire their own sacrifice . . . to call it the " most glorious, the most enviable fate " . . . but how untrue this is! Life is the great, the holy thing, and love of life is the first of virtues. The men of today have it no longer; this war has shown that, and even worse. It has proved that during the last fifteen years, many have hoped for these horrible upheavals —you cannot deny it! No man loves life who has no better use for it than to throw it into the jaws of Death. Life is a burden to many—to you rich of the middle-class, re-

actionary conservatives, whose moral dyspepsia takes away your appetite, everything tastes flat and bitter. Everything bores you. It is a heavy burden also to you proletarians, poor, unhappy, discouraged by your hard lot. In the dull obscurity of your lives, hopeless of any change for the better,—Oh, Ye of little faith!—your only chance of escape seems to be through an act of violence which lifts you out of the mire for one moment at least, even if it be the last. Anarchists and revolutionists who have preserved something of the primitive animal energy rely on these qualities to liberate themselves in this way; they are the strong. But the mass of the people are too weary to take the initiative, and that is why they eagerly welcome the sharp blade of war which pierces through to the core of the nations. They give themselves up to it, darkly, voluptuously. It is the only moment of their dim lives when they can feel the breath of the infinite within them,—and this moment is their annihilation. . . .

Is this a way to make the best of life? . . . Which we can only maintain, it would seem, by renouncing it; and for the sake of what carnivorous gods? . . . Country, Revolution. . . . who grind millions of men in their bloody jaws.

What glory can be found in death and destruction? It is Life that we need, and you do not know it, for you are not worthy. You have never felt the blessing of the living hour, the joy that circulates in the light. Half-dead souls, you would have us all die with you, and when we stretch out our hands to save you, our sick brothers, you seek to drag us down with you into the pit.

I do not lay the blame on you, poor unfortunates, but on your masters, our leaders of the hour, our intellectual and political heads, masters of gold, iron, blood, and thought! . . . You who rule the nations, who move armies; you who have formed this generation by your newspapers, your books, your schools and your churches, and who have made

docile sheep of the free souls of men! . . . All this enslaving education, whether lay or Christian, though it dwells with an unhealthy joy on military glory and its beatitude, still shows its utter hollowness, for both Church and State bait their hook with Death. . . .

Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, politicians, and priests, artists, authors, dancers of death; inwardly you are all full of decay and dead men's bones. Truly you are the sons of them that slew Christ, and like them you lay on men's shoulders burdens grievous to be borne, which you yourselves would not touch with the end of your fingers. Crucifiers are you like them, and those who come among you to help the suffering peoples, bringing blessed peace in their hands, you imprison and insult them, and as the Scripture says, persecute them from city to city until all the righteous blood shed upon the earth shall fall upon your heads.

You work only to provide food for Death; your countries are made to subdue the future to the past, and bind the living to the putrifying corpses of the dead. You condemn the new life to perpetuate the empty rites of the tomb. . . . Let us rise! The resurrection, the Easter of the living, is at hand!

Sons of men, it is not true that you are the slaves of the dead and are chained by them like serfs to the earth. Let the dead past bury its dead, and itself with them; you are children of the living, and live in your turn. Souls who are bound to the countries of the past, shake off the neurasthenic torpor, wracked by outbursts of frenzy, which weighs you down. Shake it off, my brothers, you who are young and strong; be masters of the present and the past, fathers and sons of your works. Set yourselves free! Each one of you is Man;—not flesh that rots in the tomb, but the blazing fire of life which purifies corruption and renews long-dead corpses,

the flame ever new and young which circles the earth with its burning arms. Be free! Conquerors of the Bastille, you have not yet opened the dungeon within you, the falsely called Fatality. It was built as a prison-house for you centuries ago, by slaves or tyrants. They were all convicts of the same stamp, who were afraid that you would discover that you were free. Religions, races, countries, materialistic science, the heavy shadows of the past, are between you and the sun; but go forward! Liberty is there, behind those ramparts and towers, built of prejudices, dead laws, and consecrated falsehoods. They are guarded by the interests of some, the opinion of the drilled masses, and your own doubting spirit. Dare to will; and behind the crumbling walls of this spurious Destiny, you will once more behold the sun and the illimitable horizon.

Insensible to the revolutionary heat of this appeal, the staff of the newspaper only fastened its attention on the few lines where Clerambault seemed to lump all violences together, those of the "left" along with those of the "right." What did this poet mean by giving lessons to the socialists in a party paper? In the name of what theory? He was not even a socialist. He was nothing but a Tolstoyian anarchist; let him go back to his exercises in style, and his middle-class where he belonged. Some larger-minded spirits remonstrated in vain, that, with or without any label, liberal ideas ought to be welcomed, and that those of Clerambault, however ignorant he might be of the party doctrines, were more truly socialistic than those of members of the party who joined in the work of national slaughter. These views were over-ruled; Clerambault's article was returned to him, after spending some weeks in the bottom of a drawer, on the pretext that there were so many current items that they took up all the space, and that the paper had too much copy already.

Clerambault took his article to a small review, which was more attracted by his name than by his ideas. The upshot was that the review was called down, and suspended by police order the day after the article appeared, though it had been whitewashed through and through.

Clerambault, however, persisted. The most rebellious people in the world are those who are forced to rebellion after a lifetime of submission. I remember once to have seen a big sheep so worried by a dog that he finally threw himself upon him. The dog was overcome by this unexpected reversal of the laws of nature and ran away, howling with surprise and terror. The Dog-State is too sure of its own fangs to feel afraid of a few mutinous sheep; but the lamb Clerambault no longer calculated the danger; he simply put his head down and butted. Generous and weak natures are prone to pass without transition from one etxreme to another; so from an intensely gregarious feeling Clerambault had jumped at one bound to the extreme of individual isolation. Because he knew it so well, he could see nothing around him but the plague of obedience, that social suggestion of which the effects are everywhere manifest. The passive heroism of the armies excited to frenzy, like millions of ants absorbed in the general mass, the servility of Assemblies, despising the head of their Government, but sustaining him by their votes, even at the risk of an explosion brought about by one "bolter," the sulky but well-drilled submission of even the liberal Parties, sacrificing their very reason for existence to the absurd fetish of abstract unity. This abdication, this passion, represented the true enemy in Clerambault's eyes. And it was his task, he thought, to break down its great suggestive power by awakening doubt, the spirit that eats away all chains.

THE chief seat of the disease was the idea of Nation; this inflamed point could not be touched without howls from the beast. Clerambault attacked it at once, without gloves.

What have I to do with your nations? Can you expect me to love or hate a nation? It is men that I love or hate, and in all nations you will find the noble, the base, and the ordinary man. Yes, and everywhere are few great or low, while the ordinary abound. Like or dislike a man for what he is, not for what others are; and if there is one man who is dear to me in a whole nation, that prevents me from condemning it. You talk of struggles and hatred between races? Races are the colours of life's prism; it binds them together, and we have light. Woe to him who shatters it! I am not of one race, I belong to life as a whole; I have brothers in every nation, enemy or ally, and those you would thrust upon me as compatriots are not always the nearest. The families of our souls are scattered through the world. Let us re-unite them! Our task is to undo these chaotic nations, and in their place to bind together more harmonious groups. Nothing can prevent it; on the anvil of a common suffering, persecution will forge the common affection of the tortured peoples.

Clerambault did not pride himself on his logic, but only tried to get at the popular idol through the joints of his armour. Often he did not deny the nation-idea, but accepted it as natural, at the same time attacking national rivalries in the most forcible manner. This attitude was by no means the least dangerous.

I cannot interest myself in struggles for supremacy between nations; it is indifferent which colour comes up, for humanity gains, no matter who is the winner. It is true, that in the contests of peace, the most vital, intelligent, and hard-working people, will always excel. But if the defeated competitors, or those who felt themselves falling behind, were to resort to violence to eliminate their successful rivals, it would be a monstrous thing. It would mean the sacrifice of the welfare of mankind to a commercial interest, and Country is not a business firm. It is of course unfortunate that when one nation goes up, another is apt to go down. But when "big business" in my country interferes with smaller trade, we do not say that it is a crime of lèse-patriotism, despite the fact that it may be a fight which brings ruin and death to many innocent victims.

The existing economic system of the world is calamitous and bad; it ought to be remedied; but war, which tries to swindle a more fortunate and able competitor for the benefit of the inexpert or the lazy, makes this vicious system worse; it enriches a few, and ruins the community.

All peoples cannot walk abreast on the same road; they are always passing each other, and being outstripped in their turn. What does it matter, since we are all in the same column? We should get rid of our silly self-conceit. The pole of the world's energy is constantly changing, often in the same country. In France it has passed from Roman Provence to the Loire of the Valois; now it is at Paris, but it will not stay there always. The entire creation swings in alternate rhythm from germinating spring to dying autumn. Commercial methods are not immutable, any more than the treasures beneath the earth are inexhaustible. A people spends itself for centuries, without counting the cost; its very greatness will lead to its decline. It is only by renouncing the purity of its blood and mixing with other nations that it can subsist. Our old men today are sending

the young ones to death; it does not make them younger, and they are killing the future.

Instead of raging against the laws of life, a wholesome people will try to understand them and see its real progress, not in a stupid obstinacy which refuses to grow old, but in a constant effort to advance with the age, changing and becoming greater. To each epoch its own task. It is merely sloth and weakness if we cling all our lives to the same one. Learn to change, for in that is life. The factory of humanity has work for all of us. Labour for all, peoples of the world, each man taking pride in the work of all the rest, for the travail, the genius of the whole earth is ours also!

These articles appeared here and there, whenever possible, in some little sheet of advanced literary and anarchistic views, in which violent attacks on persons took the place of a reasoned-out campaign against the order of things. They were nearly illegible, defaced as they were by the censor. Besides, when an article was reprinted in another paper, he would let pass with a capricious forgetfulness what he had cut out the day before, and cut what he had passed then. It took close study to make out the sense of the article after this treatment, but the remarkable thing was that the adversaries of Clerambault, not his friends, went to this trouble. Ordinarily, at Paris, these squalls do not last long. The most vindictive enemies, trained to wars of the pen, know that silence is a sharper weapon than insult, and get more out of their animosity by keeping it quiet; but in the hysterical crisis in which Europe was struggling, there was no guide, even for hatred. Clerambault was continually being recalled to the public mind by the violent attacks of Bertin, though he never failed to conclude each one in which he had discharged

his venom, with a disdainful: "He is not worth speaking of."

Bertin was only too familiar with the weaknesses, defects of mind, and small absurdities of his former friend; he could not resist the temptation to touch them with a sure hand, and Clerambault, stung and not wise enough to hide it, let himself be drawn into the fight, retaliated, and proved that he too could draw blood from the other. Thus a fierce enmity arose between the two.

The result might have been foreseen. Up to this time Clerambault had been inoffensive, confining himself on the whole to moral dissertations. His polemic did not step outside the circle of ideas. It might as well have been applied to Germany, England, or ancient Rome, as to the France of today. To tell the truth, like nine-tenths of his class and profession, he was ignorant of the political facts about which he declaimed, so that his trumpetings could hardly disturb the leaders of the day. In the midst of the tumult of the press, the noisy passage of arms between Clerambault and Bertin had two consequences; in the first place it forced Clerambault to play with more care, and choose a less slippery ground than logomachy, and on the other it brought him in contact with men better informed as to the facts who furnished him with the necessary information. A short time before there had been formed in France a little society, semi-clandestine, for independent study and free criticism on the war, and the causes that had led up to it. The Government, always vigilant and ready to crush any attempt at freedom of thought, nevertheless did not consider this society dangerous. Its members were prudent and calm, men of letters before all, who avoided notoriety, and contented themselves with private discussion; it was thought better policy to keep them under observation, and between four walls.

These calculations proved to be wrong, for truth modestly and laboriously discovered, though known only to five or six, cannot be uprooted; it will spring from the earth with irresistible force. Clerambault now learned for the first time of the existence of these passionate seekers after truth, who recalled the times of the Dreyfus case. In the general oppression, their apostolate behind closed doors took on the appearance of a little early-Christian group in the catacombs. Thanks to them, he discovered the falsehoods as well as the injustices of the "Great War." He had had a faint suspicion of them, but he had not dreamed how far the history that touches us most closely had been falsified, and the knowledge revolted him. Even in his most critical moments, his simplicity would never have imagined the deceptive foundations on which reposes a Crusade for the Right, and as he was not a man to keep his discovery to himself, he proclaimed it loudly, first in articles which were forbidden by the censor, and then in the shape of sarcastic apologues, or little symbolic tales, touched with irony. The Voltairian apologues slipped through sometimes, owing to the inattention of the censor, and in this way Clerambault was marked out to the authorities as a very dangerous man.

Those who thought they knew him best were surprised. His adversaries had called him sentimental, and assuredly so he was, but he was aware of it, and because he was French he could laugh at it, and at himself. It is all very well for sentimental Germans to have a thick-headed belief in themselves; deep down in an eloquent and sensitive creature like Clerambault, the vision of the Gaul—always alert in his thick woods—observes, lets nothing escape, and is ready for a laugh at everything. The surprising thing is that this under-spirit will emerge when you least expect it, during the darkest trials and in the most pressing danger. The universal sense of humour came as a tonic to Clerambault,

and his character, scarcely freed from the conventions in which it had been bound, took on suddenly a vital complexity. Good, tender, combative, irritable, always in extremes—he knew it, and that made him worse—tearful, sarcastic, sceptical, yet believing, he was surprised when he saw himself in the mirror of his writings. All his vitality, hitherto prudently shut into his *bourgeois* life, now burst forth, developed by moral solitude and the hygiene of action.

Clerambault saw that he had not known himself; he was, as it were, new-born, since that night of anguish. He learned to taste a joy of which he had never before had an idea—the giddy joy of the free lance in a fight; all his senses strung like a bow, glad in a perfect well-being.

This improved state, however, brought no advantage to Clerambault's family; his wife's share of the struggle was only the unpleasantness, a general animosity that finally made itself felt even among the small tradespeople of the neighbourhood. Rosine drooped; her secret heart-ache wore upon her all the more because of her silence; but if she said nothing her mother complained enough for two. She made no distinction between the fools who affronted her and the imprudent Clerambault who caused all the trouble; so that at every meal there were awkward remarks meant to induce him to keep still. All this was of no use, reproaches whether spoken or silent, passed over his head; he was sorry, of course, but he had thrown himself into the thick of the fight, and with a somewhat childish egotism he thrust aside anything that interfered with this new interest.

Circumstances, however, came to Madame Clerambault's assistance; an old relation who had brought her up died, leaving her little property in Berry to the Clerambaults. The mourning was a good excuse for quitting Paris, which had now become detestable, and for tearing the poet from his dangerous surroundings. There was also the question of money and of Rosine, who would be better for change of air. Clerambault gave in, and they all three went to take possession of their small inheritance, and remained in Berry during the rest of the summer and autumn. It was in the country, a respectable old house just outside a village. From the agitation of Paris Clerambault passed at once to a stagnant calm, and in the long silent days all that broke the monotony was a cock crowing in a farm-yard or a cow lowing in the meadow. Clerambault was too much wrought up to adapt himself to the slow and placid rhythm of nature; formerly

he had adored it and was in harmony with the country people from whom his family had come. Now, however, the peasants with whom he tried to talk seemed to him creatures from another planet. Certainly, they were not infected by the virus of war; they showed no emotion, and no hatred for the enemy; but then they had no animosity either against war, which they accepted as a fact. Certain keen, good-natured observations showed that they were not taken in as to the merits of the case, but since the war was there they made the most they could out of it. They might lose their sons, but they did not mean to lose money; not that they were heartless, grief had marked them deeply, though they spoke little of it; but after all, men pass away, —the land is always there. They at least had not, like the *bourgeois* in cities, sent their children to death through national fanaticism. Only they knew how to get something in exchange for what they gave; and it is probable that their sons would have thought this perfectly natural. Because you have lost someone you love, must you lose your head too? Our peasants did not lose theirs; it is said that in the country districts of France more than a million new proprietors have been made by the war.

The mind of Clerambault was alien to all this; he and these people did not speak the same language. They exchanged some vague condolences, but when he is talking to a *bourgeois* a peasant always complains; it is a habit, a way of defending himself against a possible appeal to his pocketbook; they would have talked in the same way about an epidemic of fever. Clerambault was always the Parisian in their eyes; he belonged to another tribe, and if they had thoughts, they would not tell them to him.

This lack of response stifled Clerambault's words; impressionable as he was, he could no longer hear himself. All was silence; he had friends unknown, and at a distance, who tried to communicate with him, but their voices were

intercepted by postal spies—one of the disgraces of our time. On the pretext of suppressing foreign espionage, our Government made spies of its own citizens, and not content with a watch on politics, it violated a man's thoughts, and taught its agents how to listen at doors like lackeys. The premium thus put on baseness filled this country—and all the others—with volunteer detectives, gentlemen, men of letters, many of them slackers, who bought their own security with the safety of others, calling their denunciations by the name of patriotism.

Thanks to these informers, those of liberal opinions could not get in touch with one another; that great monster, the State—pricked by its bad conscience—suspected and feared half a dozen liberal-minded people, alone, weak, and destitute; and each one of these liberals surrounded by spies, ate his heart out in his jail, and ignorant that others suffered with him, felt himself slowly dying, freezing in the polar ice of his despair.

Clerambault was too hot-blooded to let himself be buried under this snowy shroud; but the soul is not all, the body is a plant which needs human soil. Deprived of sympathy, reduced to feed on itself, it perishes. In vain did Clerambault try to prove to himself that millions of other minds were in agreement with his own; it could not replace the actual contact with one living heart. Faith is sufficient for the spirit, but the heart is like Thomas, it must touch to be convinced.

Clerambault had not foreseen this physical weakness; he felt stifled, his body seemed on fire, his skin burning, his life seemed to be drying up at the source. It was as if he were under an exhausted vacuum-bell. A wall kept him from the air.

One evening, like a consumptive after a bad day, he had been wandering about the house from room to room, as if in search of a breath of fresh air, when a letter came that

had somehow slipped through the meshes of the net. An old man like himself, a village schoolmaster in a remote valley of Dauphiny wrote thus:

"The war has taken everything from me; of those whom I used to know, some have been killed, and the rest are so altered that I hardly recognise them. They have trampled on all that made life worth having to me; my hope of progress, my faith in a future of brotherly reason.

"I was ready to die in my despair, when a paper in which you were spoken of insultingly, drew my attention to your articles: *To the Dead* and *To Her Whom We Loved.* I wept with joy as I read them; I am not then left alone to suffer? I am not solitary?—You do believe; then, my dear Sir, tell me that you still have faith in these things. They really exist, and cannot be destroyed? I must tell you how much good it does me to know that; for I had begun to doubt. You must forgive me, but I am old and alone and very weary. . . . God bless you, Sir! I can die in peace, now that, thanks to you, I know that I have not been deceived."

Instantly it was as if a window had been opened to the air; Clerambault's lungs were filled, his heart beat strongly again, life seemed to be renewed, and to flow once more in a full channel. How deep is the need we have of love from one another! . . . A hand stretched out in the hour of my agony makes me feel that I am not a branch torn from the tree, but a living part of it; we save each other. I give my strength, which would be nothing if it were not taken. Truth alone is like a spark struck from a stone; dry, harsh, ephemeral. Will it die out? No, for it has kindled another soul, and a new star has risen on the horizon.

THE new star was seen but for a few moments, then a cloud covered it, and it vanished forever.

Clerambault wrote the same day to his unknown friend, telling him effusively of all his trials and dangerous opinions, but no answer came. Some weeks later, Clerambault wrote again, but without success. Such was his longing for a friend with whom to share his troubles and his hopes that he took the train to Grenoble, and from there made his way on foot to the village of which he had the address; but when, joyful with the surprise he brought, he knocked at the door of the schoolhouse, the man who opened it evidently understood nothing of his errand. After some explanation it appeared that this was a newcomer in the village; that his predecessor had been dismissed in disgrace a month before and ordered to a distance, but that the trouble of the journey had been spared him, for he had died of pneumonia the day before he was to have left the place where he had lived for thirty years. He was there still, but under the ground. Clerambault saw the cross over the newly-made mound, but he never knew if his lost friend had at least received his words of sympathy. It was better for him to remain in doubt, for the letters had never reached their destination; even this gleam of light had been denied to the poor old schoolmaster.

The end of this summer in Berry was one of the most arid periods in Clerambault's life. He talked with no one, he wrote nothing and he had no way of communicating directly with the working people. He had always made himself liked on the rare occasions on which he had come into contact with them—in a crowd, on holidays, or in the workingmen's schools; but shyness on both sides held

him back. Each felt his inferiority; with pride on the one hand, and awkwardness on the other, for Clerambault knew that in many essential respects he was inferior to the intelligent workman. He was right; for from their ranks will be recruited the leaders of the future. The best class of these men contained many honest and virile minds able to understand Clerambault. With an untouched idealism they still kept a firm hold on reality, and though their daily life had accustomed them to struggles, disappointments, and treachery, they were trained to patience; young as some of them were, they were veterans of the social war, and there was much that they could have taught Clerambault. They knew that everything is for sale, that nothing is to be had for nothing, that those who desire the future happiness of men must pay the price now, in their own sufferings; that the smallest progress is gained step by step and is lost often twenty times before it is finally conquered. There is nothing final in this world. These men, solid and patient as the earth, would have been of great use to Clerambault, and his vivid intelligence would have been like a ray of sunshine to them.

Unfortunately both he and they had to bear the results of the archaic caste system; injurious as it is and fatal to the community not less than to the individual, raising between the pretended equals of our so-called "democracies" the excessive inequality of fortune, education, and life. Journalists supply the only means of communication between caste and caste, and they form a caste by themselves, representing neither the one side nor the other. The voice of the newspapers alone now broke the silence that surrounded Clerambault, and nothing could stop their "Brekekekex, coax, coax."

The disastrous results of a new offensive found them, as always, bravely at their post. Once more the optimist oracles of the pontiffs of the rear-guard were proved to be

wrong, but no one seemed to notice it. Other prophecies succeeded, and were given out and swallowed with the same assurance. Neither those who wrote, nor those who read, saw that they had deceived themselves; in all sincerity they did not know it; they did not remember what they had written the day before. What can you expect from such feather-headed creatures who do not know if they are on their heads or their heels? But it must be allowed that they know how to fall on their feet after one of their somersaults. One conviction a day is enough for them; and what does the quality matter, since they are fresh every hour?

Towards the end of the autumn, in order to keep up the morale which sank before the sadness of the coming winter, the press started a new propaganda against German atrocities; it "went across" perfectly, and the thermometer of public opinion rose to fever heat. Even in the placid Berry village for several weeks all sorts of cruel things were said; the curé took part and preached a sermon on vengeance. Clerambault heard this from his wife at breakfast and said plainly what he thought of it before the servant who was waiting at table. The whole village knew that he was a boche before night; and every morning after that he could read it written up on his front door. Madame Clerambault's temper was not improved by this, and Rosine, who had taken to religion in the disappointment of her young love, was too much occupied with her unhappy soul and its experiences to think of the troubles of others. The sweetest natures have times when they are simply and absolutely selfish.

LEFT to himself alone, deprived of the means of action, Clerambault turned his heated thoughts back on himself. Nothing now held him from the path of harsh truth; there was nothing between him and its cold light. His soul was shrivelled like those *fuorusciti* who, thrown from the walls of the cruel city, gaze at it from without with faithless eyes. It was no longer the sad vision of the first night of his trials, when his bleeding wounds still linked him with other men; all ties were now broken, as with open eyes his spirit sank down whirling into the abyss; the slow descent into hell, from circle to circle, alone in the silence.

"I see you, you myriads of herded peoples, hugging together perforce in shoals to spawn and to think! Each group of you, like the bees, has a special sacred odour of its own. The stench of the queen-bee makes the unity of the hive and gives joy to the labour of the bees. As with the ants, whosoever does not stink like me, I kill! O you bee-hives of men! each of you has its own peculiar smell of race, religion, morals and approved tradition; it impregnates your bodies, your wax, the brood-comb of your hives; it permeates your entire lives from birth to death; and woe to him who would wash himself clean of it.

"He who would sense the mustiness of this swarm-thinking, the night-sweat of a hallucinated people, should look back at the rites and beliefs of ancient history. Let him ask the quizzical Herodotus to unroll for him the film of human wanderings, the long panorama of social customs, sometimes ignoble or ridiculous, but always venerated; of the Scythians, the Gatae, the Issedones, the Gin-

dares, the Nasamones, the Sauromates, the Lydians, the Lybians, and the Egyptians; bipeds of all colours, from East to West and from North to South. The Great King, who was a man of wit, asked the Greeks, who burn their dead, to eat them; and the Hindoos, who eat them, to burn them, and was much amused by their indignation. The wise Herodotus who doffs his cap, though he may grin behind it, will not judge them himself and does not think it fair to laugh at them. He says: 'If it were proposed to all men to choose between the best laws of different nations, each one would give the preference to his own; so true it is that every man is convinced that his own country is the best. Nothing can be truer than the words of Pindar: *Custom is the Sovereign of all men.*'

"It is true everyone must drink out of his own trough, but you would at least think that we would allow others to do likewise; but not at all, we cannot enjoy our own without spitting in that of our neighbours. It is the will of God,—for a god we must have in some shape, in that of man or beast, or even of a thing, a black or red line as in the Middle Ages,—a blackbird, a crow, a blazon of some kind; we must have something on which to throw the responsibility of our insanities.

"Now that the coat-of-arms has been superseded by the flag, we declare that we are freed from superstitions! But at what time were they darker than they are now? Under our new doctrine of equality we are all obliged to smell exactly alike. We are not even free to say that we are not free; that would be sacrilege! With the pack on our back we must bawl out: 'Liberty forever!' Under the orders of her father, the daughter of Cheops made herself a harlot that she might contribute by her body to the building of the pyramid. And now to raise the pyramids of our massive republics, millions of citizens prostitute their consciences and themselves, body and soul, to falsehood and

hate. We have become past masters in the great art of lying. True, it was always known, but the difference between us and our forefathers is that they knew themselves to be liars, and were not far from admitting it in their simple way; it was a necessity of nature—they relieved themselves before the passers-by, as you see men do to-day in the South. . . . 'I shall lie,' said Darius, innocently. "One should not be too scrupulous when it is useful to tell a lie. Those who speak the truth want the same thing as those who tell falsehoods. We do so in the hope of gaining some advantage, and we are truthful for the same reason and that people may feel confidence in us. Thus, though we may not follow the same road, we are all aiming at the same thing, for if there were naught to gain, a truth-teller would be equally ready to lie, and a liar to tell the truth.'—We, my dear contemporaries, are more modest; we do not look on at each other telling falsehoods on the curb. It must be done behind four walls. We lie to ourselves, and we never confess it, not even to our innermost selves. No, we do not lie, we 'idealise.' . . . Come, let us see your eyes, and let them see clearly, if you are free men!

"Free! What are you free from, and which of you is free in your countries today? Are you free to act? No, since the State disposes of your life, so that you must either assassinate others or be yourselves assassinated. Are you free to speak or to write? No, for they imprison you if you dare to speak your mind. Can you even think for yourselves? Not unless it is *sub rosa*—and the bottom of a cellar is none too secure.

Be silent and wary, for there are sharp eyes on you. . . . To keep you from action there are sentries, corporals with stripes on their arms, and sentries, too, over your minds; churches and universities that prescribe what you may believe, and what you may not. . . . What do you complain of, they say, even if you are not complaining.

You must not fatigue your mind by thinking; repeat your catechism!

" Are we not told that this catechism was freely agreed to by the sovereign people?—A fine sovereignty, truly! Idiots, who puff out your cheeks over the word Democracy! Democracy is the art of usurping the people's place, of shearing their wool off closely, in this holy name, for the benefit of some of Democracy's good apostles. In peace times the people only know what goes on through the press, which is bought and told what to say by those whose interest it is to hoodwink the public, while the truth is kept under lock and key. In war time it is even better, for then it is the people themselves who are locked up. Allowing that they have ever known what they wanted, it is no longer possible for them to speak above their breath. Obey. *Perinde ac cadaver*. . . . Ten millions of corpses. . . . The living are hardly better off, depressed as they are by four years of sham patriotism, circus-parades, tom-toms, threats, braggings, hatreds, informers, trials for treason, and summary executions. The demagogues have called in all the reserves of obscurantism to extinguish the last gleams of good sense that lingered in the people, and to reduce them to imbecility.

" It is not enough to debase them; they must be so stupefied that they wish to be debased. The formidable autocracies of Egypt, Persia, and Syria, made playthings of the lives of millions of men; and the secret of their power lay in the supernatural light of their pseudo-divinity. From the extreme limit of the ages of credulity, every absolute monarchy has been a theocracy. In our democracies, however, it is impossible to believe in the divinity of humbugs, shaky and discredited, like some of our moth-eaten Ministers; we are too close to them, we know their dirty tricks, so they have invented the idea of concealing God behind their drop-curtain; God means the Republic, the Country,

Justice, Civilisation; the names are painted up on the outside. Each booth at the fair displays in huge many-coloured posters, the picture of its Beautiful Giantess; millions crowd around to see it, but they do not tell us what they think when they come out. Perhaps they found it difficult to think at all! Some stay inside and others have seen nothing. But those who stand in front of the stage gaping, they know God is there for they have seen His picture. The wish that we have to believe in Him—that is the god of each one of us.

" Why does this desire flame up so furiously? Because we do not want to see the truth—and therefore *because we do see it*. Therein lies the tragedy of humanity; it refuses to see and know. As a last resort, it is forced to find divinity in the mire. Let us, on our part, dare to look the truth in the face.

" The instinct of murder is deeply engraved in the heart of nature. It is a truly devilish instinct, since it seems to have created beings not only to eat, but to be eaten. One species of cormorants eats fishes. The fishermen exterminate the birds. And the fish disappear, because they fed on the excrement of the birds who devoured them. Thus the chain of beings is like a serpent eating his own tail. . . . If only we were not sentient beings, did not witness our own tortures, we might escape from this hell. There are two ways only: that of Buddha, who effaced within himself the painful illusion of life; and the religious way, which throws the veil of a dazzling falsehood over crime and sorrow. Those who devour others are said to be the chosen people who work for God. The weight of sin, thrown into one of the scales of life, finds its counterpoise beyond in the dream where all wounds and sorrows are to be cured. The form of the beyond varies from people to people and from time to time, and these variations are called Progress, though it is always the same need of illusion. Our terrible consciousness insists

on seeing and reckoning with the unjust law; for if we do not give it something to bite on, fill its maw somehow, it will howl with hunger and fear, crying out: 'I must have belief or death!' And that is why we go in flocks; for security, to make a common certainty out of our individual doubts.

"What have we to do with truth? Most men think that truth is the Adversary. Of course they do not say this, but by a tacit agreement what they call truth is a sickening mixture of much falsehood and very little truth, which serves to paint over the lie so that we get deceit and eternal slavery. Not the monuments of faith and love are the most durable, those of servitude last much longer. Rheims and the Parthenon fall to ruins, but the Pyramids of Egypt defy the ages; all about them is the desert, its mirages and its moving sand. When I think of the millions of souls swallowed up by the spirit of slavery in the course of centuries—heretics, revolutionists, rebels lay and clerical,—I am no longer surprised at the mediocrity that spreads like greasy water over the world.

We who have so far kept our heads above the gloomy surface, what are we to do in face of the implacable universe, where the stronger eternally crushes the weaker, and is crushed by a stronger yet, in his turn? Shall we resign ourselves to a voluntary sacrifice through pity or weariness? Or shall we join in and cut the throats of the weak, without the shadow of an illusion as to the blind cosmic cruelty? What choice is left, but to try to keep out of the struggle through selfishness—or wisdom, which is another form of the same thing?"

In the crisis of acute pessimism which had seized upon Clerambault during these months of inhuman isolation, he could not contemplate even the possibility of progress; that progress in which he had once believed, as men do in God.

The human species now appeared to him as devoted to a murderous destiny. After having ravaged the planet and exterminated other species, it was now to be destroyed by its own hands. It is the law of justice. Man only became ruler of the world by treachery and force (above all by treachery). Those more noble than he have perhaps—or certainly—fallen under his blows; he has destroyed some, degraded and brutalised others. During the thousands of years in which he has shared life with other beings, he has feigned—falsely—not to comprehend them, not to see them as brothers, suffering, loving, and dreaming like himself. In order to exploit them, to torture them without remorse, his men of thought have told him that these creatures cannot think, that he alone possesses this gift. And now he is not far from saying the same thing of his fellow-men whom he dismembers and destroys. Butcher, murderer, you have had no pity, why should you implore it for yourself today? . . .

Of all the old friendships that had once surrounded Clerambault, one only remained, his friendship with Madame Mairet, whose husband had been killed in the Argonne.

François Mairet was not quite forty years old when he met with an obscure death in the trenches. He was one of the foremost French biologists, an unpretending scholar and hard worker, a patient spirit. But celebrity was assured to him before long, though he was in no haste to welcome the meretricious charmer, as her favours have to be shared with too many wire-pullers. The silent joys that intimacy with science bestows on her elect were sufficient for him, with only one heart on earth to taste them with him. His wife shared all his thoughts. She came of a scholarly family, was rather younger than he; one of those serious, loving, weak, yet proud hearts, that must give but only give themselves once. Her existence was bound up in Mairet's interests. Perhaps she would have shared the life of another man equally well, if circumstances had been different, but she had married Mairet with everything that was his. Like many of the best of women, her intelligence was quick to understand the man whom her heart had chosen. She had begun by being his pupil, and became his partner, helping in his work and in his laboratory researches. They had no children and had every thought in common, both of them being freethinkers, with high ideals, destitute of religion, as well as of any national superstition.

In 1914 Mairet was mobilised, and went simply as a duty, without any illusions as to the cause that he was called upon to serve by the accidents of time and country. His

letters from the front were clear and stoical; he had never ceased to see the ignominy of the war. But he felt obliged to sacrifice himself in obedience to fate, which had made him a part of the errors, the sufferings, and the confused struggles of an unfortunate animal species slowly evolving towards an unknown end.

His family and the Clerambaults had known each other in the country, before either of them were transplanted to Paris; this acquaintance formed the basis of an amicable intercourse, solid rather than intimate—for Mairet opened his heart to no one but his wife—but resting on an esteem that nothing could shake.

They had not corresponded since the beginning of the war; each had been too much absorbed by his own troubles. Men who went to fight did not scatter their letters among their friends, but generally concentrated on one person whom they loved best, and to whom they told everything. Mairet's wife, as always, was his only confidante. His letters were a journal in which he thought aloud; and in one of the last he spoke of Clerambault. He had seen extracts from his first articles in some of the nationalist papers which were the only ones allowed at the front, where they were quoted with insulting comments. He spoke of them to his wife, saying what comfort he had found in these words of an honest man driven to speak out, and he begged her to let Clerambault know that his old friendship for him was now all the warmer and closer. He also asked Madame Mairet to send him the succeeding articles, but he died before they could reach him.

When he was gone the woman, who had lived only for him, tried to draw nearer to the people who had been near to him in the last days of his life. She wrote to Clerambault, and he, who was eating his heart out in his provincial retreat, lacking even the energy to get away, welcomed her letter as a deliverance. He returned at once to Paris; and

they both found a bitter joy in evoking together the image of the absent. They formed the habit of meeting on one evening in the week, when they would, so to speak, immerse themselves in recollections of him. Clerambault was the only one of his friends who could understand the tragedy hidden under a sacrifice gilded by no patriotic illusion.

At first Madame Mairet seemed to find comfort in showing all that she had received; she read his letters, full of disenchanted confidences; they reflected on them with deep emotion, and she brought them into the discussion of the problems that had caused the death of Mairet and of millions of others. In this keen analysis, nothing stopped Clerambault; and she was not a woman to hesitate in the search for truth. But nevertheless . . .

Clerambault soon became aware that his words made her uneasy, though he was only saying aloud things that she knew well and that were strongly confirmed by Mairet's letters, namely, the criminal futility of these deaths, and the sterility of all this heroism. She tried to take back her confidences, or even to minimise the meaning of them, with an eagerness that did not seem perfectly sincere. She brought to mind sayings of her husband's which apparently showed him more in sympathy with general opinion, and implied that he approved of it. One day Clerambault was listening while she read a letter which she had read to him before. He noticed that she skipped a phrase in which Mairet expressed his heroic pessimism, and when he remarked on it she appeared vexed. After this her manner became more distant, her annoyance passed into coldness, then irritation, till it even grew into a sort of smothered hostility, and finally she avoided him, though without an open rupture. Clerambault felt that she had a grudge against him and that he should see no more of her.

The truth was that, at the same time that Clerambault pursued his relentless analysis which struck at the founda-

tions of current beliefs, an inverse process of reconstruction and idealisation was going on in the mind of Madame Mairet. Her grief longed to convince itself that after all there had been a holy cause, and the dead man was no longer there to help her to bear the truth. Where two stand together there may be joy in the most terrible truths, but when one is alone they are mortal.

Clerambault understood it all, and his quick sympathies warned him of the pain he caused and shared; for he made the suffering of this woman his own. He nearly reached the point of approving her revolt against himself, for he knew her deep hidden sorrow, and that the truth that he brought was powerless to help it—still worse, it added one evil more. . . .

Insoluble problem! Those who are bereaved cannot dispense with the murderous delusions of which they are the victims, and if these are torn away their suffering becomes intolerable. Families that have lost sons, husbands, and fathers, must needs believe that it was for a just and holy cause, and statesmen are forced to continue to deceive themselves and others. For if this were to cease, life would be insupportable to themselves and to those whom they govern. How unfortunate is Man; he is the prey of his own ideas, has given up everything to them, and finds that each day he must continue to give more, lest the gulf open under his feet and he be swallowed up in it. After four years of unheard-of pain and ruin, can we possibly admit that it was all for nothing? That not only our victory will be more ruinous still, but that we ought not to have expected anything else; that the war was absurd, and we, self-deceivers? . . . Never! we would rather die to the last man. When one man finds that he has thrown away his life, he sinks down in despair. What would it be in the case of a nation, of ten nations, or of civilisation as a whole? . . .

Clerambault heard the cry that went up from the multitude: "Life, at any cost! Save us, no matter how!"

"But, you do not know how to save yourselves. The road you follow only leads on to fresh catastrophes, to an infinite mass of suffering."

"No matter how frightful they are, not as bad as what you offer us. Let us die with our illusions, rather than live without them. Such a life as that, is a death in life!"

"*He who has deciphered the secret of life and found the answer,*" says the disenchanted, but harmonious voice of Amiel, "*is no longer bound on the great wheel of existence, he has quitted the world of the living. When illusion vanishes, nothingness resumes its eternal reign, the bright bubble has burst in infinite space, and our poor thought is dissolved in the immutable repose of the limitless void.*"

Unluckily this repose in the void is the worst torture for a man of the white race. He would rather endure any torment that life may bring. "Do not tear them from me," he cries, "you kill me when you destroy the cruel falsehoods by which I live."

Clerambault bitterly adopted the name that a nationalist paper had given him in derision: "The one against all." Yes, he was the common enemy, the destroyer of our life-giving illusions.

He could not bear this; the thought of making others suffer was too painful to him. How then was he to get out of this tragic no-thoroughfare? Wherever he turned, he found the same insolvable dilemma; either a fatal illusion, or death without it.

"I will accept neither the one nor the other."

"Whether you accept it or no, you must yield—for the way is barred."

"Nevertheless, I shall pass through . . ."

PART FOUR

CLERAMBAULT was passing through a new danger-zone. His solitary journey was like a mountain ascension, where a man finds himself suddenly enveloped in fog, clinging to a rock, unable to advance a step. He could see nothing in front of him, and, no matter to which side he turned, he could hear beneath him the roar of the torrent of suffering. Even so, he could not stand still; though he hung over the abyss and his hold threatened to give way.

He had reached one of these dark turnings, and to make it worse, the news that day, as barked out by the press, made the heart ache by its insanity. Useless hecatombs, which the induced egotism of the world behind the lines thought natural; cruelties on all sides, criminal reprisals for crimes—for which these good people clamoured, and loudly applauded. The horizon that surrounded the poor human creatures in their burrow had never seemed so dark and pitiless.

Clerambault asked himself if the law of love that he felt within himself had not been designed for other worlds, and different humanities. The mail had brought him letters full of fresh threats; and knowing that, in the tragic absurdity of the time, his life was at the mercy of the first madman who happened to turn up, he hoped secretly that he might not have long to wait. But being of good stock, he kept on his way, his head up as usual, working steadily and methodically at his daily task so as to gain the end, no matter what that might be, of the path whereon he had set his feet.

He remembered that on this day he had promised to go and see his niece Aline, who had just been confined. She was the daughter of a sister who had died, and who had

been very dear to him. A little older than Maxime, she had been brought up with him. As she grew into girlhood she developed a complicated character. Restless and discontented, always thinking of herself, she wanted to be loved and to tyrannise. She had also too much curiosity; dangerous experiences were an attraction to her, and with all this she was rather dry, but emotional, vindictive and high-tempered. Still, when she chose she could be tender and attractive. Maxime and she had played the game together, and carried it pretty far; so that it had been necessary to watch them closely. In spite of his irony, Maxime had been caught by the dark eyes that pierced through him with their electric thrill; and Aline was irritated and attracted by Maxime's mockery. They had loved and quarrelled furiously, and then they had both gone on to something else. She had shot arrows into several other hearts; and then, when she thought the right time had come,—there is always a time for everything,—she had married, in the most reasonable way, a successful, prosperous man of business, head of a firm which sold artistic and ecclesiastical furniture in the Rue Bonaparte. She was about to have a child when her husband was ordered to the front. There could be no doubt of her ardent patriotism; for self-love includes one's country. Clerambault would never have expected to find any sympathy in her for his theories of fraternal pity. She had little enough for her friends, but none at all for her enemies. She would have ground them in a mortar with the same cold satisfaction that she felt when she tormented hearts or teased insects because something or somebody had vexed her.

As the fruit within her ripened, her attention was concentrated upon it; all the strength of her heart seemed to flow inward. The war receded; the cannon of Noyon sounded no longer in her ears. When she spoke of the

war,—which she did less and less every day,—you would have thought that she was talking of some distant colonial expedition. Of course she remembered the dangers that threatened her husband, and pitied him naturally:—"Poor dear boy!" with a little smile as much as to say, "He has not much luck. Not very clever, you know." . . . But she did not dwell on the subject, and, thank Heaven! it left no traces on her mind. She had paid her score, she thought, and her conscience was at rest; now she was in haste to go back to the world's most serious task. One really would have supposed that the whole world hung on the egg that she was about to lay.

Clerambault had been so absorbed by his struggles that he had not seen Aline for months, and had therefore been unable to follow the change in her mood. Rosine might have spoken of it before him, but he had paid no attention. Within the last twenty-four hours he had heard in quick succession of the birth of the baby and of the fact that Aline's husband was missing, like Maxime, and he immediately pictured to himself the suffering of the young mother. He thought of her as he had always known her—vibrating between pleasure and pain, but always feeling the latter more keenly, giving herself up to it, and even when she was happy, finding reasons for distress. She was violent too, bitter, agitated, fighting against fate, and apt to be vexed with everyone around her. He was not sure that she was not angry with him personally, on account of his ideas about reconciliation now that she must be breathing out vengeance. He knew that his attitude was a scandal in the family, and that no one would be less disposed to tolerate it than Aline. But no matter how she received him, he felt that he must go to her and help her in any way that his affection could suggest. Expecting a storm, but resigned to it, he climbed up the stairs and rang the bell at his niece's door.

He found her lying in bed with the infant, which she had had placed by her side. She looked calm and young, with a sweet expression of beaming happiness on her face. She was like the blooming older sister of the tiny baby, at whom she looked with adoring laughter, as he lay there waving his little spidery legs, his mouth open, hardly alive as yet, still dreaming of the dark warm place from which he had come. She greeted Clerambault with a cry of triumph:

"Oh, Uncle dear, how sweet of you to come! Do look at him! Did you ever see such a darling?"

She was so proud of her wonderful masterpiece that she was positively grateful to anyone who would look at him. Clerambault had never seen her so pretty and so sweet. He hardly saw the child, though he went through all the antics that politeness required, making inarticulate admiring noises which the mother expected and snapped up like a bird. He saw only her happy face, her lovely smiling eyes, and heard her charming childish laughter. How good it is to see anyone so happy! All the things that he had come prepared to say to her went clean out of his head—all useless and out of place. The only thing necessary was to gaze on the infant wonder, and share the delight of the hen over her chick, joining in her delicious cluck of innocent vanity.

The shadow of the war, however, did pass before his eyes for a moment, the thought of the brutal, useless carnage, the dead son, the missing husband; and as he bent over the child he could not help thinking with a sad smile:

"Why bring children into the world, if it is to butcher them like this? I wonder what will happen to this poor little chap twenty years hence?"

Thoughts like these did not trouble the mother. They could not dim her sunshine. All cares seemed far away. She could see nothing but the "joy that a man was born into the world."

This man-child is to each mother in turn the incarnation of all the hope of humanity. The sadness and folly of the present day, what do they matter? It is *he* perhaps who will put an end to them. He is for every mother the miracle, the promised Messiah! . . .

Just as he was going, Clerambault ventured a word of sympathy as to her husband. She sighed deeply:

"Poor Armand! I'm sure that he was taken prisoner."

"Have you had any news?" asked Clerambault.

"No, no, but it is more than probable. . . . I am almost certain. If not, you know, I should have heard. . . ."

She seemed to brush away the disagreeable thought, as if it were a fly. (Go away! How did it get in here?)

Then she added, the smile coming back into her eyes:

"It will be much better for him, he can rest. I am easier about him there, than when he was in the trenches. . . ." And then, her mind springing back to her world's wonder:

"Won't he be glad when he sees the treasure the good God has sent me?" . . .

It was when Clerambault stood up to go that she condescended to remember that there were sorrows still in the world. She thought of Maxime's death, and did drop a word of pretty sympathy. But how clear it was that at bottom she was completely indifferent! Absolutely so . . . though full of good-will, which was something with her. More surprising still, softened by her new happiness, she had a glimpse of the tired face and sad heart of the old man. She had a vague recollection that he had done something foolish, and had trouble in consequence. And instead of scolding him as he deserved, she forgave him tacitly, with a magnanimous smile, like a little princess. "Dear Uncle," she said, with an affectionate if slightly patronising tone: "you must not worry yourself, it will all come out right. . . . Give me a kiss!"

As Clerambault went away he was amused by the consolation he had received from her whom he had gone to console. He realised how slight our suffering must appear in the eyes of indifferent Nature. All her concern is for the bloom of the coming spring. Let the dead leaves fall now to the ground, the tree will grow all the better and put forth fresh foliage in due season. . . . Lovely, beloved Spring!

THOSE who can never bloom again find you very cruel, gentle Spring! Those who have lost all that they loved, their hopes, their strength, their youth—everything that made life worth living to them. . . .

The world was full of mutilated bodies and souls; some bitterly lamenting their lost happiness, and some, yet more miserable, sorrowing for what had been denied them, the cup dashed from their lips, in the full bloom of love, and of their twenty years.

Clerambault came home one evening at the end of January, wet and chilled through with the fog, after standing at a wood-yard. He had stood for hours in line waiting his turn in the crowd, and after all they had been told that there would be no distribution that day. As he came near the house where he lived he heard his name, and a young man who was talking to the janitor turned and held out a letter, looking rather embarrassed as Clerambault came forward. The right sleeve of his coat was pinned up to the shoulder, and there was a patch over his right eye; he was pale, and evidently had been laid up for months. Clerambault spoke pleasantly to him and tried to take the letter, but the man drew it back quickly, saying that it was of no consequence now. Clerambault then asked if he would not come up and talk to him a little while, but the other hesitated, and the poet might have perceived that he was trying to get away, but not being very quick at seeing into other people's minds, he said good-naturedly: "My flat is rather high up. . . ."

This seemed to touch the visitor on a tender point, and

he answered: "I can get up well enough," and turned towards the staircase. Clerambault now understood that besides his other wounds, the heart within him had been wounded to the quick.

They sat down in the fireless study, and like the room, it was some time before the conversation thawed out. All that Clerambault could get out of the man were short stiff answers, not very clear, and given in rather an irritated tone. He learned that his name was Julian Moreau, that he had been a student at the Faculty of Letters, and had just passed three months at Val-de-Grace. He was living alone in Paris, in a room over in the Latin Quarter, though he had a widowed mother and some other relations in Orleans; he did not explain at first why he was not with them.

All at once after a short silence he decided to speak, and in a low voice, hoarse at first, but softening as he went on, he told Clerambault that his articles had been brought into his trench by a man just back from leave, and handed about from one to the other; to him they had been a real blessing. They answered to the cry of his inmost soul: "Thou shalt not lie." The papers and reviews made him furious; they had the impudence to show the soldier a false picture of the armies, trumped-up letters from the front, a cheap comedy style of courage, and inappropriate joking; all the abject boasting of actors safe at home, speechifying over the death of others. It was an insult to be slobbered over with the disgusting kisses of these prostitutes of the press. As if their sufferings were a mockery!

Clerambault's writings found an echo in their hearts; not that he understood them, no one could understand who had not shared their hardships. But he pitied them, and spoke humanely of the unfortunates in all camps. He dared to speak of the injustices, common to all nations, which had led to the general suffering. He could not take away their

trouble, but he did raise it into an atmosphere where it could be borne.

"If you only knew how we crave a word of real sympathy; it is all very well to be hardened, or old,—there are grey-haired, bent men among us—but after what we have seen, suffered, and done to others, there are times when we are like lost children, looking for their mother to console them. Even our mothers seem far away. At times we get strange letters from home, as if we were deserted by our own flesh and blood.

Clerambault hid his face in his hands with a groan.

"What is the matter?" said Moreau, "are you ill?"

"You remind me of all the harm that I did."

"You? No, it was other people that did the harm."

"Yes, I, as much as the others. You must try to forgive us all."

"You are the last who ought to say so."

"If the truth were known, I should be among the first. For I am one of the few who see clearly how wicked I was." He began to inveigh against his generation, but broke off with a discouraged gesture:

"None of that does any good. . . . Tell me about yourself."

His voice was so humble that Moreau was really touched to see the older man blame himself so severely. All his distrust melted away, and he threw wide the door of his bitter, wounded spirit, confessing that he had come several times as far as the house, but could not make up his mind to leave his letter. He never did consent to show it. Since he came out of the hospital he had not been able to talk to anyone; these people back here sickened him with their little preoccupations, their business, their pleasures, the restrictions to their pleasures, their selfishness, their ignorance and lack of comprehension. He felt like a stranger among them, more than if he were with African savages.

Besides,—he stopped, the angry words seemed to stick in his throat—it was not only these people—he felt a stranger to all the world, cut off from normal life, from the pleasures and work of other men by his infirmities. He was a mere wreck, blind and maimed. The poor fellow was absurdly ashamed of it; he blushed at the pitying glances that people threw at him in passing—like a penny that you give, turning away your head at the same time from the unpleasant sight. For in his sensitiveness he exaggerated his ugliness and was disgusted by his deformity. He dwelt on his lost joys and ruined youth; when he saw couples in the street, he could not help feeling jealous; the tears would come into his eyes.

Even this was not all, and when he had poured out the bitterness of his heart—and Clerambault's compassion encouraged him to speak further—he got down to the worst of the trouble, which he and his comrades felt like a cancer that one does not dare to look at. Through his obscure, violent, and miserable talk, Clerambault at last made out what it was that tore the hearts of these young men. It is easy enough for dried-up egotists, withered intellectuals, to sneer at this love of life in the young, and their despair at the loss of it; but it was not alone their ruined, blasted youth that pressed on these poor soldiers,—though that was terrible enough—the worst was not to know the reason for this sacrifice, and the poisonous suspicion that it was all in vain. The pain of these victims could not be soothed by the gross appeal of a foolish racial supremacy, nor by a fragment of ground fought for between States. They knew now how much earth a man needs to die on, and that the blood of all races is part of the same stream of life.

Clerambault felt that he was a sort of elder brother to these young men; the sense of this and his duty towards them gave him a strength that he would not otherwise have

had, and he charged their messenger with words of hope and consolation.

"Your sufferings are not thrown away," he said. "It is true that they are the fruit of a cruel error, but the errors themselves are not all lost. The scourge of today is the explosion of evils which have ravaged Europe for ages; pride and cupidity. It is made up of conscienceless States, the disease of capitalism, and is become the monstrous machine called Civilisation, full of intolerance, hypocrisy, and violence. Everything is breaking up; all must be done over again; it is a tremendous task, but do not speak of discouragement, for yours is the greatest work that has ever been offered to a generation. The fire of the trenches and the asphyxiating gases that blind you come as much from agitators in the rear as from the enemy; you must strive to see clearly, to see where the real fight lies. It is not against a people but against an unhealthy society founded on exploitation and rivalry between nations, on the subordination of the free conscience to the Machine-State. The peoples, resigned or sceptical, would not have seen this with the tragical clearness in which it now appears, without the painful disturbance of the war. I do not bless this pain; leave that to the bigots of our old religions! We do not love sorrow and we all want happiness, but if sorrow must come, at least let it be of some use! Do not let your sufferings add to those of others. You must not give way. You are taught in the army that when the order to advance is once given in a battle it is more dangerous to fall back than to go on; so do not look back; leave your ruins behind you, and march on towards the new world."

As he spoke the eyes of his young auditor seemed to say: "Tell me more, more yet, more even than hopes, give me certainties, tell of the victory which will come soon."

Men need to be tempted and decoyed, even the best of

them. In exchange for any sacrifice they make for an ideal, you have to promise them, if not immediate realisation, at least an eternal compensation, as all the religions do. Jesus was followed because they thought that He would give them victory here or hereafter.—But he who would speak the truth cannot promise or assure men of victory; the risks are not to be ignored; perhaps it will never come, in any case it will be a long time. To disciples, such a thought is crushingly pessimistic; not so for the master, who has the serenity of a man who, having reached the mountain top, can see over all the surrounding country, while they can only see the steep hill-side which they must climb. How is he to communicate his calm to them? If they cannot look through the eyes of the master, they can always see his eyes from which are reflected the vision denied to them; there they can read the assurance that he who knows the truth (as they believe) is delivered from all their trials.

The eyes of Julian Moreau sought in Clerambault's eyes for this security of soul, this inward harmony; and poor anxious Clerambault had it not. But was he sure that it was not there? . . . Looking at Julian humbly, he saw, . . . he saw that Julian had found it in him. And as a man climbing up through a fog suddenly finds himself in the light, he saw that the light was in him, and that it had come to him because he needed it to shine upon another.

After the wounded man had gone away, somewhat comforted, Clerambault felt slightly dazed, and sat drinking in the strange happiness that the heart feels when, however unfortunate itself, it has been able to help another now or in the future. How profound is the instinct for happiness, the plenitude of being! All aspire to it, but it is not the same for all. There are some that wish only to possess; to others, sight is possession, and to others yet, faith is sight. We are links of a chain and this instinct unites us; from those who only seek their own good, or that of their family, or their country, up to the being which embraces millions of beings and desires the good of all. There are those who, having no joy of their own, can almost unconsciously bestow it on others, as Clerambault had done; for they can see the light on his face while his own eyes are in shadow.

The look of his young friend had revealed an unknown treasure to poor Clerambault, and the knowledge of the divine message with which he was entrusted re-established his lost union with other men. He had only contended with them because he was their hardy pioneer, their Christopher Columbus forcing his way across the desert ocean, that he might open the road to the New World. They deride, but follow him; for every true idea, whether understood or not, is a ship under weigh, and the souls of the past are drawn after in its wake.

From this day onward he averted his eyes from the irreparable present of the war and its dead, and looked towards the living, and the future which is in our hands. We are hypnotised, obsessed by the thought of those that we have lost, and the morbid temptation to bury our hearts in their graves, but we must tear ourselves away from the

baleful vapours that rise, as in Rome, from The Way of the Tombs. March on! This is no time to halt. We have not yet earned the right to rest with them, for there are others who need us. There, like the wrecks of the Grand Army, you can see in the distance those who drag themselves along, searching on the dreary plain for the half-effaced path.

The thought of the sombre pessimism which threatened to overwhelm these young men after the war was a grave anxiety to Clerambault. The moral danger was a serious one, of which the Governments took no notice at all. They were like bad coachmen who flog their horses up a steep hill at a gallop; it is true that the horse reaches the top, but as the road goes on he stumbles and falls, foundered for life. With what a gallant spirit our young men rushed to the assault in the beginning of the war! And then their ardour gradually diminished. But the horse was still in harness, and the shafts held him up. A factitious excitement was kept up all around him, his daily ration was seasoned with glittering hopes; and though the strength went out of it little by little, the poor creature could not fall down, could not even complain, he had not the strength to think. The countersign all about these victims was to hear nothing, to stop the ears and to lie.

Day after day the battle-tide ebbed, and left wrecks on the sand, men wounded and maimed; and through them the depths of this human ocean were brought to the light. These poor wretches, ruthlessly torn from life, moved helplessly in the void, too feeble to cling to the passions of yesterday or dreams of tomorrow. Some asked themselves blindly, and others with a cruelly clear insight, why they had been born, what life meant. . . .

"Since he who is destroyed, suffers, and he who destroys has no pleasure, and is shortly destroyed himself, tell me

what no philosopher can explain; whom does it please, and to whose profit is this unfortunate life of the universe, which is only preserved by the injury or death of all the creatures which compose it?" * . . .

It is necessary to answer these men, to give them a reason for living, but there is no such need for a man of Clerambault's age; his life is over, and all he requires is to free his conscience as a sort of public bequest.

To young people who have all their life before them, it is not enough to contemplate truth across a heap of corpses; whatever the past may have been, the future alone counts for them. Let us clear away the ruins!

What causes them the most pain? Their own suffering? No, it is their lack of faith in the altar on which this suffering was laid—(does a man regret if he sacrifices himself for the woman he loves, or for his child?)—This doubt poisons them, takes away the courage to pursue their way, because they fear to find only despair at the end. This is why people say to you: "Never shake the ideal of Country, it ought rather to be built up." What a derision! As if it were possible to restore a lost faith by force of will! We deceive ourselves; we know it in the bottom of our hearts, and this consciousness kills courage and joy.

Let us be brave enough to reject that in which we no longer believe. The trees drop their leaves in the autumn in order that they may put forth new leaves in the spring. Out of your past illusions, make fires as the peasants do with the fallen leaves; the fresh grass, the new faith, will grow all the more thickly, for it is there waiting. Nature does not die, it changes shape continually; like her, let us cast off the garment of the past.

Look carefully, and reckon up these hard years. You have fought and suffered for your country, and what have

* Leopardi.

you gained by it? You have discovered the brotherhood of the men who fight and suffer. Is the price too high? No, if you will listen to your heart, if you will dare to open it to the new faith which has come to you when you least expected it.

The thing that disappoints and drives us to despair is that we cling to what we had at the beginning; and when we no longer trust that, we feel that all is lost. A great nation has never reached the object sought; and so much the better, for almost always what is reached is superior to what was sought, though different. It is not wise to start out with our wisdom ready made, but to gather it sincerely as we go along.

You are not the same men that you were in 1914. If you dare admit it, then dare to act it also! That will be the chief gain—perhaps the only one—of the war. But do you really care? So many things conspire to intimidate you; the weariness of these years, old habits, dread of the effort needed to examine yourself, to throw away what is dead, and stand for what is living. We have, we do not know what respect for the old, a lazy preference for what we are accustomed to, even if it is bad, fatal. Then there is the indolent need for what is easy which makes us take a trodden path rather than hew out a new one for ourselves. Is it not the ideal of most Frenchmen to accept their plan of life ready-made in childhood and never change it? If only this war, which has destroyed so many of your hearths, could force you to come out from your ashes, to found other hearths, to seek other truths!

The wish to break with the past, and adventure themselves in unknown regions was not lacking to these young men. They would rather have preferred to go ahead without stopping, and they had scarcely left the Old World when they expected to take possession of the New.—No hesitation, no middle course; they wanted absolute solutions, either the docile servitude of the past, or revolution.

These were Moreau's views; he looked upon Clerambault's hope of social revolution as a certainty, and in the exhortation to win truth patiently step by step he heard an appeal to violent action which would conquer it at once.

He introduced Clerambault to two or three groups of young intellectuals with revolutionary tendencies. They were not very numerous, for here and there you would see the same faces, but they gained an importance which they would not otherwise have had, from the watch which was kept on them by the authorities. Silly people in power, armed to the teeth with millions of bayonets, police and courts of justice at their command, yet uneasy and afraid to let a dozen freethinkers meet to discuss them!

These circles had not the air of conspiracies, and though they rather invited persecution, their activities were confined to words. What else was there for them to do but talk? They were separated from the mass of their fellow thinkers, who had been drawn into the army or the war-machine, which would only give them up when they were past service. What of the youth of Europe remained behind the lines? There were the slackers, who often descended to the lowest depths of meanness to make others fight, so that it should be forgotten that they did not fight themselves. Setting these aside, the representatives—*rari nantes*

—of the younger generation in civil life were those discharged from the army for physical incapacity, and a few broken-down wrecks of the war, like Moreau. In these mutilated or diseased bodies the spirit was like a candle lighted behind broken windows. Twisted and smoky, it seemed as if a breath would extinguish it. But it was all the more ardent for knowing what to expect from life.

Sudden changes from extreme pessimism to an equally extreme optimism would occur, and these violent oscillations of the barometer did not always correspond with the course of events. Pessimism was easily explained, but its contrary was more remarkable, and it would have been difficult to account for it. They were just a handful of people without means of action, and every day seemed to give the lie to their ideas, but they appeared more contented as things grew worse. Their hope was in the worst, that mad belief proper to fanatical and oppressed minorities; Anti-Christ was to bring back Christ; the new order would rise when the crimes of the old had brought it to ruin; and it did not disturb them that they and their dreams might be swept away also. These young irreconcilables wished above all to prevent the partial realisation of their dreams in the old order of things. All or nothing! How foolish to try to make the world better; let it be perfect, or go to pieces. It was a mysticism of the Great Overturning, of the Revolution, and it affected the minds of those least religious; they even went farther than the churches. Foolish race of man! Always this faith in the absolute, which leads ever to the same intoxication, but the same disasters. Always mad for the war between nations, for the war of classes, for universal peace. It seems as if when humanity stuck its nose out of the boiling mud of the Creation, it had a sun-stroke from which it has never recovered, and which, at intervals, subjects it to a recurrence of delirium.

Perhaps these mystical revolutionaries are forerunners of

mutations that are brooding in the race—which may brood for centuries and perhaps never burst forth. For there are millions of latent possibilities in nature, for one realised in the time allotted to our humanity. And it is perhaps this obscure sentiment of what might be, but will not come to pass, which sometimes gives to this sort of mysticism another form, rarer, more tragical—an exalted pessimism, the dangerous attraction of sacrifice. How many of these revolutionists have we seen secretly convinced of the overwhelming force of evil, and the certain defeat of their cause, and yet transported with love for a lost cause ". . . *sed victa Catoni*" . . . and filled with the hope of dying for her, destroying or being destroyed. The crushed Commune gave rise to many aspirations, not for its victory, but for a similar annihilation!— In the hearts of the most materialistic there burns forever a spark of that eternal fire, that hope so often buffeted and denied, but still maintained, of an imperishable refuge for all the oppressed in some better Hereafter.

THESE young people welcomed Clerambault with great affection and esteem, hoping to make him one of themselves. Some of them read in his ideas a reflection of their own, while others saw in him just a sincere old *bourgeois* whose heart had been hitherto his only guide—a rather insufficient, though generous one. They hoped that he would let himself be taught by their science, and like them, would follow to their extreme limits the logical consequences of the principles laid down. Clerambault resisted feebly, for he knew that nothing can be done to convince a young man who has made himself part of a system. Discussion is hopeless at that age. Earlier there is some chance to act on him, when, as it were, the hermit-crab is looking for his shell; and later something may be done when the shell begins to wear and be uncomfortable; but when the coat is new, the only thing is to let him wear it while it fits him. If he grows, or shrinks, he will get another. We will force no one, but let no one try to put force on us!

No one in this circle, at least in the early days, thought of constraining Clerambault, but sometimes it seemed to him that his ideas were strangely habited in the fashion of his hosts. What unexpected echoes he heard on their lips! He let his friends talk, while he himself said but little, but when he had left them, he would feel troubled and rather ironical. " Are those my thoughts? " he would say to himself. It is terribly difficult for one soul to communicate with another, impossible perhaps, and who knows? . . . Nature is wiser than we . . . it may be that this is for our good.

Is it right, is it even possible for us to utter all our thoughts? We reach a conclusion slowly, painfully,

through a series of trials; it is the formula of the delicate equilibrium between the inward elements. Change the elements, their proportions, their nature, the formula is no longer accurate and will produce different results, and if you suddenly communicate your whole thought to another, you run the risk of alarming, not helping him. There are cases in which, if he had understood, it might have killed him. Nature, however, is prudent and takes precautions. Your friend does not comprehend you, because he cannot, his instinct will not let him; all that he gets from your thought is the shock when it touches his; the ball glances off, but it is not so easy to tell in what direction.

Men do not listen with their brains alone, but with their dispositions and their passions, and out of what you offer them, each chooses his own and rejects the rest, through a deep instinct of self-defence. Our minds do not throw open the door to every new idea, but rather keep a wary eye on new-comers through a peep-hole. The lofty thoughts of the sages, of Jesus, of Socrates; how were they received? In those days men who spoke such things were killed; twenty years later they were treated as gods—another way of killing them, in fact, by placing their thoughts at a distance, in the kingdom of heaven. The world would indeed come to an end if such ideas were to be put in practice here and now; and their authors knew this well. Perhaps they showed the greatness of their souls more by what they did not say than by what they did; how eloquent were the pathetic silences of Jesus! The golden veil of the ancient symbols and myths, made to shield our weak timid sight! Too often, what is for one the breath of life, is for another death, or worse, murder!

What are we to do, if our hands are full of verities? Shall we spread them broadcast?—Suppose the seed of thought may spring up in weeds or poisonous plants . . .?

Poor thinker, there is no need to tremble, you are not

the master of Fate, but you form part of it, you are one of its voices. Speak, then; that is the law of your being. Speak out your whole thought, but with kindness; be like a good mother. It may not be given to her to make men of her children, but she can patiently teach them how to make men of themselves if they will.

You cannot set others free, in spite of them, and from the outside; and even if it were possible, what good would it do? If they do not free themselves, tomorrow they will fall back into slavery. All you can do is to set a good example, and say: "There is the road, follow it and you will find Freedom." . . . .

IN spite of his resolution to do the best he could and leave the rest to the gods, it was fortunate for Clerambault that he could not see all the consequences of his ideas. His thought aspired to the reign of Peace; and very probably it would contribute in some degree to the stirring up of social struggles, like all true pacifism, however paradoxical this may seem. For true pacifism is a condemnation of the present.

Clerambault had no suspicion of the terrible forces that would one day make use of his name. With a wholly opposite effect, his spirit produced a harmony among his young associates by reacting against their violence. He felt the value of life all the more, because they held it in such light esteem; and in this respect they were not different from the Nationalists whom he opposed. Very few prefer life to their ideals—which is, we are told, one of Man's noblest qualities.

In spite of all this, it was a pleasure to Clerambault when he met a man who loved life for its own sake. This was a comrade of Moreau's, who had also been severely wounded. His name was Gillot, and in civil life he had been an industrial designer. A shell had plastered him from head to foot; he had lost a leg and his ear-drum was broken, but he had re-acted more energetically against his fate than Moreau. He was small and dark, with bright eyes full of gaiety, in spite of all that he had gone through. Though he agreed with Moreau in general as to the war and the crimes of the social order, he viewed the same events and the same men with different eyes; from which arose many discussions between the two young men.

One day Moreau had just been telling Clerambault of some gloomy experience of the trenches: "Yes," said Gillot, "it did happen like that and the worst of it was, that it had no effect on us, not the least little bit." And when Moreau protested indignantly: "Well, perhaps you, and one or two more may have minded a little,—but most of them did not even notice it." He kept on to stop further remonstrances from his friend: "I am not trying to make out that you were better than the rest, old man, there is no need for that; I only say it because it is so. Look here," he added, turning to Clerambault, "those who have come back and written about all this, they tell us, of course, what they felt. But they felt more than ordinary mortals because they were artists, and naturally everything got on their nerves, while the rest of us were tougher. Now that I think of it, that makes it more terrible; when you read these stories that sicken you, and make the hair stand up on your head, you don't get the full effect. Think of fellows looking on, smoking, chaffing, busy with something else. You have to, you know, or you would go all to pieces. . . . All the same, it is astonishing what human creatures can get used to! I believe they could make themselves comfortable at the bottom of a sewer. It really disgusts a man, for I was just the same myself. You mustn't suppose that I was like this chap here, always staring at a death's head. Like everybody else, I thought the whole thing was idiotic; but life is like that, as far as I can see! . . . We did what we had to do, and let it go at that;—the end? Well, one is as good as another, whether you lose your own skin or the war comes to an end, it finishes it up all the same; and in the meantime you are alive, you eat, you sleep, your bowels—excuse me, one must tell things as they are! . . . Do you want to know what is at the bottom of it all, Sir? The real truth is that we do not care for life, or not enough. In one of your articles you

say very truly that life is the great thing;—only you wouldn't think so to see most people at this minute! Not much life about them; they all seem drowsy, waiting for the last sleep; it looks as if they said to themselves: 'We are flat on our backs now, no need to stir an inch.' No, we don't make enough out of life. And then people are always trying to spoil it for you. From the time you are a child they keep on telling you about the beauty of death, or about dead folks. In the catechism, in the history books, they are always shouting: '*Mourir pour la Patrie!*' It is either popery or patriotism, whichever you please; and then this life of the present day is a perfect nuisance; it looks as if it was made expressly to take the backbone out of a man. There is no more initiative. We are all nothing but machines, but with no real system; we only do pieces of work, never knowing where our work will fit in; most often it doesn't fit at all. It is all a mess, with no good in it for anyone; we are thrown in on top of one another like herrings in a barrel, no one knows why;—but then we don't know either why we live at all; it is not life, we are just there.

"They tell us about some time in the dark ages when our grandfathers took the Bastille. Well, you would think to hear the fakers talk who run things now that there was nothing left to do, that we were all in heaven; you can see it carved on the monuments. We know that it is not so; there is another pot boiling, another revolution on the way; but the old one did not do such great things for us after all! It's hard to see plain, hard to trust anybody; there is no one to show us the way, to point to something grand and fine above all these swamps full of toads. . . . People are always doing something to confuse the issue, nowadays; talking about Right, Justice, Liberty. But that trick is played out. Good enough to die for, but you can't live for things like that."

"How about the present?" asked Clerambault.

"Now? There is no going back, but I often think that if I had to begin over again—"

"When did you change your mind about all these things?"

"That was the funniest thing of all. It was as soon as I was wounded. It was like getting out of bed in the morning. I had hardly slipped a leg out of life than I wanted to draw it in again. I had been so well off, and never thought of it, ass that I was! I can still see myself, as I came to. The ground was all torn up around me, worse even than the bodies themselves lying in heaps, mixed pell-mell like a lot of jack-straws; the ground simply reeked, as if it was itself bleeding. It was pitch dark, and at first I did not feel anything but the cold, except that I knew I was hit, all right. . . . I didn't know exactly what piece of me was missing, but I was not in a hurry to find out; I was afraid to know, afraid to stir, there was only one thing I was sure of, that I was alive. If I had only a minute left, I meant to hold on to it. . . . There was a rocket in the sky; I never thought what it meant, I didn't care, but the curve it made, and the light, like a bright flower. . . . I can't tell you how lovely it seemed. I simply drank it in. . . . I remembered when I was a child, one night near La Samaritaine. There were fireworks on the river. That child seemed to be someone else, who made me laugh, and yet I was sorry for him; and then I thought that it was a good thing to be alive, and grow up, and have something, somebody, no matter who to love . . . even that rocket; and then the pain came on, and I began to howl, and didn't know any more till I found myself in the ambulance. There wasn't much fun in living then; it felt as if a dog was gnawing my bones . . . might as well have stayed at the bottom of the hole . . . but even then how fine it seemed to live the way I used to, just live on every day without

pain . . . think of that! and we never notice it,—without any pain at all . . . none! . . . it seemed like a dream, and when it did let up for a second, just to taste the air on your tongue, and feel light all over your body—God Almighty! to think that it was like that all the time before, and I thought nothing of it. . . . What fools we are to wait till we lose a thing before we understand it! And when we do want it, and ask pardon because we did not appreciate it before, all we hear is: 'Too late!'"

"It is never too late," said Clerambault.

Gillot was only too ready to believe this; as an educated workman he was better armed for the fray than Moreau or Clerambault himself. Nothing depressed him for long; " fall down, pick yourself up again, and try once more," he would say, and he always believed he could surmount any obstacle that barred his way. He was ready to march against them on his one leg, the quicker the better. Like the others, he was devoted to the idea of revolution and found means to reconcile it with his optimism; everything was to pass off quietly according to him, for he was a man without rancour.

It would not have been safe, however, to trust him too much in this respect; there are many surprises in these plebeian characters, for they are very easily moved and apt to change. Clerambault heard him one day talking with a friend named Lagneau on leave from the front; they said the poilus meant to knock everything to pieces when the war was over, maybe before. A man of the lower classes in France is often charming, quick to seize on your idea before you have had a chance to explain it thoroughly; but good Lord! how soon he forgets. He forgets what was said, what he answered, what he saw, what he believed, what he wanted; but he is always sure of what he says, and sees, and thinks now. When Gillot was talking to Lagneau, his arguments were exactly contrary to those he had advanced on the previous day to Clerambault. It was not only that his ideas had changed, but apparently his whole disposition. One morning there would be nothing violent enough for his thirst for action and destruction, and the next he would talk about going into a little business with lots of money, the best of food,

a tribe of children to bring up, and to hell with the rest! Though they all called themselves sincere internationalists, there were few among these poilus who had not preserved the old French prejudice of superiority of race over the rest of the world, enemies or friends; and even in their own country over the other provinces, or if they were Parisians, over the rest of France. This idea was firmly embedded in their minds, and they boasted of it, not maliciously but by way of a joke. Uncomplaining, willing, always ready to go, like Gillot, they were certainly capable of making a revolution and then un-making it, starting another, and so on—tra-la-la—till all was upset and they were ready to be the prey of the first adventurer who happened along. Our political foxes know well enough that the best way to check a revolution is, at the right moment, to let it blow over while the people are amused.

It looked then as if the hour was at hand. A year before the end of the war in both camps there were months and weeks when the infinite patience of the martyrised people seemed on the point of giving way; when a great cry was ready to go up, "Enough." For the first time there was the universal impression of a bloody deception. It is easy to understand the indignation of the people seeing billions thrown away on the war when before it their leaders had haggled over a few hundred thousand for social betterments. There were figures that exasperated them more than any speeches on the subject. Someone had calculated that it cost 75,000 francs to kill a man; that made ten millions of corpses, and for the same sum we could have had ten millions of stockholders. The stupidest could see the immense value of the treasure, and the horrible, the shameful, waste for an illusion. There were things more abject still; from one end of Europe to the other, there were vermin fattening on death, war-profiteers, robbers of corpses.

"Do not talk to us any more," said these young men to themselves, "of the struggle of democracies against autocracies;—they are all tarred with the same brush. In all countries the war has pointed out the leaders to the vengeance of the people; that unworthy middle class, political, financial, intellectual, that in a single century of power has heaped on the world more exactions, crimes, ruins and follies, than kings and churches had inflicted in ten centuries."

This is why when the axes of those heroic woodsmen, Lenine and Trotzky, were heard in the forest, many oppressed hearts thrilled with joy and hope, and in every country there was sharpening of hatchets. The leading classes rose up against the common danger, all over Europe, in both opposing camps. There was no negotiation needed for them to reach an agreement on this subject, for their instinct spoke loudly. The fiercest enemies of Germany, through the organs of the *bourgeoisie,* tacitly gave a free hand to the Kaiser to strangle Russian liberty which struck at the root of that social injustice on which they all lived. In the absurdity of their hatred, they could not conceal their delight when they saw Prussian Militarism—that monster who afterwards turned on them—avenge them on these daring rebels. Naturally this only increased the admiration for these excommunicated defiers of the world, on the part of the down-trodden masses and the small number of independent spirits.

The pot began to boil with a vengeance, and to stop it the governments of Europe shut down the lid and sat on it. The stupid class in control kept throwing fuel on the flame, and then wondered at the alarming rumblings. This revolt of the elements was attributed to the wicked designs of some free speakers, to mysterious intrigues, to the enemy's gold, to the pacifists; and none of them saw—though a child would have known it—that, if they wanted

to prevent an explosion, the first thing to do was to put out the fire. The god of all these powers was force; no matter what they were called, empires, or republics, it was the mailed fist, disguised, gloved but hard and sure of itself. It became also, like a rising tide, the law of the oppressed, a dark struggle between two contrary pressures. Where the metal had worn thin—in Russia first—the boiler had burst. Where there were cracks in the cover—as in neutral countries—the hissing steam escaped, but a deceitful calm reigned over the countries at war, kept down by oppression. To the oppressors this calm was reassuring; they were armed equally against the enemy or their own citizens. The machine of war is double-ended, the cover strong, made of the best steel, and firmly screwed down; that, at least, cannot be torn off—no, but suppose the whole thing blows up together!

Repressed, like everyone else, Clerambault saw rebellion gathering around him. He understood it, thought it inevitable; but that was not a reason for loving it. He did not believe in the *Amor Fati.* It was enough to understand; the tyrant has no claim to be loved.

CLERAMBAULT'S young friends were not sparing of their ideas, and it surprised them to see how little warmth he showed towards the new idol from the North: the rule of the proletariat. They had no timorous scruples or half-measures, they meant to make the world happy in their way—perhaps not in its own. At one stroke they decreed the suppression of all liberties in opposition to theirs; the fallen middle classes were not to be allowed to meet, or to vote, or to have the freedom of the press.

"This is all very well," said Clerambault, "but at this rate they will be the new proletariat, tyranny will merely change places."

"Only for a time," was the answer, "the last oppression, which will kill tyranny."

"Yes, the same old war for right and liberty; which is always going to be the war to end war; but in the meantime it is stronger than ever, and rights like liberty are trampled under foot."

Of course they all protested indignantly against this comparison; in their eyes war and those who waged it were equally infamous.

"None the less," said Clerambault gently, "many of you have fought, and nearly all of you have believed in it . . . no, do not deny it! Besides, the feeling that inspired you had its noble side; a great wickedness was shown to you, and you threw yourselves upon it to root it out, in a very fine spirit. Only you seem to think that there is only one wickedness in the world, and, that when that has been purged away, we shall all return to the Golden Age. The same thing happened at the time of the Dreyfus Case; all the well-meaning people of Europe—I among them—

seemed never to have heard before of the condemnation of an innocent man. They were terribly upset by it, and they turned the world inside out to wash off the impurity. Alas! this was done, but both washers and washed grew discouraged in the process, and when it was all over, lo,—the world was just as black as ever! It seems as if man were incapable of grasping the whole of human misery; he dreads to see the extent of the evil, and in order not to be overwhelmed by it, he fixes on some one point, where he localises all the trouble, and will see nothing further. All this is human nature, and easy enough to understand, my friends; but we should have more courage, and acknowledge the truth that the evil is everywhere; among ourselves, as well as with the enemy. You have found this out little by little in our own country, and seeing the tares in the wheat, you want to throw yourselves against your governments with the same fury that made you see incarnate evil in the person of the enemy. But if ever you recognise that the tares are in you also, then you may turn on yourselves in utter despair. Is not this much to be feared, after the revolutions we have seen, where those who came to bring justice found themselves, without knowing why, with soiled hands and hearts? You are like big children. When will you cease to insist on the absolute good?"

They might have replied that you must will the absolute, in order to arrive at the real; the mind can dally with shades of meaning, which are impossible to action, where it must be all or nothing. Clerambault had the choice between them and their adversaries; there was no other.

Yes, he knew it well enough; there was no other choice in the field of action, where all is determined in advance. Just as the unjust victory leads inevitably to the revenge which in its turn will be unjust, so capitalistic oppression will provoke the proletarian revolution, which will follow the bad example and oppress, when it has the power—an

endless chain. Here is a stern Greek justice which the mind can accept and even honour as the rule of the universe. But the heart cannot submit, cannot accept it. Its mission is to break the law of universal warfare. Can it ever come to pass? Who can tell! But in any case it is clear that the hopes and wishes of the heart are outside the order of nature; her mission is rather above nature, and in its essence *religious.*

Clerambault, who was filled with this spirit, did not as yet dare to avow it; or at least he did not venture to use the word "religious," that word which the religions, that have so little of its spirit, have discredited in the eyes of today.

If Clerambault himself could not see clearly into his own thought, it was hardly to be expected that his young friends should do so, and even if they had seen, they would never have understood. They could not bear the idea that a man who condemned the present state of things as bad and destructive, should hesitate at the most energetic methods for its suppression. They were not wrong from their point of view, which was that of immediate action, but the field of the mind is greater, its battles cover a wider space; it does not waste its energies in bloody skirmishes. Even admitting the methods advocated by his friends, Clerambault could not accept their axiom, that "the end justifies the means." For, on the contrary, he believed that the means are even more important to real progress than the end . . . what end? Will there ever be such a thing?

This idea was irritating and confusing to these young minds; it served to increase a dangerous hostility, which had arisen in the last five years among the working class, against the intellectuals. No doubt the latter had richly deserved it; how far away seemed the time when men of thought marched at the head of revolutions! Whereas now they were one with the forces of reaction. Even the limited number of those who had kept aloof, while blaming the mistakes of the ring, were, like Clerambault, unable to give up their individualism, which had saved them once, but now held them prisoners, outside the new movement of the masses. This conclusion once reached by the revolutionists, it was but one step to a declaration that the intellectuals must fall, and not a very long step. The pride of the working class already showed itself in articles and speeches, while waiting for the moment when, as in Russia, it could

pass to action; and it demanded that the intellectuals should submit servilely to the proletarian leaders. It was even remarkable how some of the intellectuals were among the most eager in demanding this lowering of the position of their group. One would have thought that they did not wish it to be supposed that they belonged to it. Perhaps they had forgotten that they did.

Moreau, however, had not forgotten it; he was all the more bitter in repudiating this class, whose shirt of Nessus still clung to his skin, and it made him extremely violent.

He now began to display singularly aggressive sentiments towards Clerambault; during a discussion he would interrupt him rudely, with a kind of sarcastic and bitter irritation. It almost seemed as if he meant to wound him.

Clerambault did not take offence; he rather felt great pity for Moreau; he knew what he suffered, and he could imagine the bitterness of a young life spoiled like his. Patience and resignation, the moral nourishment on which stomachs fifty years old subsist, were not suited to his youth.

One evening Moreau had shown himself particularly disagreeable, and yet he persisted in walking home with Clerambault, as if he could not make up his mind to leave him. He walked along by his side, silent and frowning. All at once Clerambault stopped, and putting his hand through Moreau's arm with a friendly gesture said with a smile:

"It's all wrong, isn't it, old fellow?"

Moreau was somewhat taken aback, but he pulled himself together and asked drily what made anyone think that things were "all wrong."

"I thought so because you were so cross tonight," said Clerambault good naturedly, and in answer to a protesting murmur. "Yes, you certainly were trying to hurt me,—just a little. . . . I know of course that you would not really,—but when a man like you tries to inflict pain on

others it is because he is suffering himself . . . isn't that true? "

" Yes, it is true," said Moreau, " you must forgive me, but it hurts me when I see that you are not in sympathy with our action."

" And are you? " demanded Clerambault. Moreau did not seem to understand. " You yourself," repeated Clerambault, " do you believe in it? "

" Of course I do! What a question! " said Moreau indignantly.

" I doubt it," said Clerambault gently. Moreau seemed to be on the point of losing his temper, but in a moment he said more quietly: " You are mistaken." Clerambault turned to walk on. " All right," said he, " you know your own thoughts better than I do."

For some minutes they continued in silence; then Moreau seized his old friend's arm, and said excitedly:

" How did you know it? "—and his resistance having broken down, he confessed the despair hidden under his aggressive determination to believe and act. He was eaten up with pessimism, a natural consequence of his excessive idealism which had been so cruelly disappointed. The religious souls of former times were tranquil enough; they placed the kingdom of God so far away that no event could touch it; but those of today have established it on earth, by the work of human love and reason, so that when life deals a blow at their dream all life seems horrible to them. There were days when Moreau was tempted to cut his throat! Humanity seemed made of rotteness; he saw with despair the defeats, failures, flaws carved on the destiny of the race from the very beginning—the worm in the bud—and he could not endure the idea of this absurd and tragic fate, which man can never escape. Like Clerambault, he recognized the poison which is in the intelligence, since he had it in his veins, but unlike his elder, who had passed the

crisis and only saw danger in the irregularity of thought and not in its essence, Moreau was maddened by the idea that the poison was a necessary part of intelligence. His diseased imagination tortured him by all sorts of bugbears; thought appeared to him as a sickness, setting an indelible mark on the human race; and he pictured to himself in advance all the cataclysms to which it led. Already, thought he, we behold reason staggering with pride before the forces that science has put at her disposal—demons of nature, obedient to the magical formulas of chemistry and distracted by this suddenly-acquired power, turning to self-destruction.

Nevertheless Moreau was too young to remain in the grip of these terrors. He wanted action at any price, anything sooner than to be left alone with them. Why not urge him to act, instead of trying to hold him back?

"My dear boy," said Clerambault, "it is not right to urge another man to a dangerous act, unless you are ready to share it. I have no use for agitators, even if they are sincere, who send others to the stake and do not set the example of martyrdom themselves. There is but one truly sacred type of revolutionary, the Crucified; but very few men are made for the aureole of the cross. The trouble is that we always assign duties to ourselves which are superhuman or inhuman. It is not good for the ordinary man to strive after the "*Uebermenschkheit,*" and it can only prove to him a source of useless suffering; but each man can aspire to shed light, order, peace, and kindness around him in his little circle; and that should be happiness enough."

"Not quite enough for me," said Moreau. "Doubt would creep in; it must be all or nothing."

"I know. Your revolution would leave no place for doubt. Your hearts are hard and burning; your brains like geometric patterns. Everything or nothing. No shading! But what would life be without it? It is its greatest charm

and its chief merit as well; fragile beauty and goodness, weakness everywhere. We must offer love and help; day by day, and step by step. The world is not transformed by force, or by a miracle, in the twinkling of an eye; but second by second it moves forward in infinity and the humblest who feels it partakes of infinity. Patience, and let us not think that one wrong effaced will save humanity; it will only make one day bright, but other days and more light will come; each will bring its sun. You would not wish to stay its course? "

" We have not the time to wait for all this," said Moreau. " Every day brings us frightful problems which must be decided on the spot. If we are not to be the masters, then we shall be victims; . . . we, do I say? Not ourselves alone, we are already victimised, but all that is dear to us, all that holds us to life, hope in the future, the salvation of humanity. See the things that press upon us, the agonising questions as to those who will come after us, and those who have children. This war is not yet over, and it is only too evident that its crimes and falsehoods have sown the seeds of new wars, near at hand. Why do we have children? For what do they grow up? To be butchered like this? Look where you will, there is no answer. Are we to leave these crazy countries, this old continent, and emigrate? But where? Are their fifty acres of ground on the globe where independent honest people can take refuge? We must be on one side or the other; you see well enough that we have to choose between patriotism and revolution. If not, what remains? Non-resistance? Is that what you would have? But there is nothing in that unless you have religious faith; otherwise it is only the resignation of the lamb led to the slaughter. Unfortunately, the greater number decide on nothing, prefer not to think, turn their eyes away from the future, blinded by the hope that what they have seen and suffered will not

recur. That is why we must decide for them, whether they want it or not, make them quicken their step, save them in spite of themselves. Revolution means a few men who will for all humanity."

"I do not think that I should like it," said Clerambault, "if another decided for me. And on the other hand, I should not want to usurp another man's will; I should prefer to leave each one free, and not interfere with the liberty of others. But I know that I am asking too much."

"Only what is impossible," said Moreau. "When you begin to will, you cannot stop halfway. There are just two sorts of men, those who have too great will-power—like Lenine, and a couple of dozen men in the whole course of history—and those who have too little, who can decide nothing, like us, me, if you like. It is clear enough, despair is all that drives me to will anything. . . ."

"Why despair?" said Clerambault. "A man's fate is made every day by himself, and none knows what it will be; it is what we are. If you are cast down, so also is your fate."

"We shall never have strength enough," answered Moreau sadly. "Don't you believe that I see what infinitely small chances of success a revolution would have now in our country, under present conditions? Think of all the destruction, the economic losses, the demoralisation, the fatal lassitude caused by the war." And he added: "It was not true what I told you the first time we met, about all my comrades feeling as I did, rebelling against the suffering. Gillot told you there are only a few of us, and the others are good fellows for the most part but weak as water! They can see how things are, clearly enough, but sooner than run their heads against a wall they would rather not think about it, or pass it off with a joke. We French are always ready to laugh, it is our treasure and our ruin. It is a fine thing, but what a hold it gives to

our oppressors. 'Let them sing as long as they are willing to pay,' as the Italian said. 'Let us laugh, so long as we are ready to die.' . . . we might say. And then this terrible force of habit, that Gillot was talking about. A man will get used to no matter what ridiculous or painful conditions, provided they last long enough, and that he has company. He becomes habituated to cold, to heat, to death, and to crime. His whole force for resistance is used in adapting himself; and then he curls up in his corner and does not dare to stir, for fear that any change will bring back the pain. We are all so terribly tired! When the soldiers come back, they will have only one thought—to sleep and forget."

"How about the excitable Lagneau, who talks about blowing everything to pieces?"

"I have known Lagneau since the beginning of the war, and he has been in succession, royalist, "revanchard," annexationist, internationalist, socialist, anarchist, bolshevist, and I-don't-give-a damnist. He will finish as a reactionary, and will be sent to make food for cannon against the enemy that our government will pick out among our adversaries or our friends of today. Do you suppose that the people are of our way of thinking? Perhaps, or they may agree with the others. They will take up all opinions one after the other."

"You are a revolutionary then because you are discouraged?" said Clerambault, laughing.

"There are plenty like that among us."

"Gillot came out of the war more optimistic than he went in."

"Gillot is the forgetful sort, but I don't envy him that," said Moreau bitterly.

"But you ought not to upset him," said Clerambault. "Gillot needs all the help you can give him."

"Help from me?" said Moreau incredulously.

"He is not naturally strong, and if you would make him so, you must let him see that you believe in him."

"Do you think belief comes by willing to have it?"

"You know whether that is true! No, I think, is the answer. Belief comes through love."

"By love of those who believe?"

"Is it not always through love, and only in that way, that we learn to trust?"

Moreau was touched; he had been a clever youth, eaten up by the craving for knowledge, and like the rest of his class, he had suffered for lack of brotherly affection. True human intercourse is banished from the education of today, but this vital sentiment, hitherto repressed, had revived in the trenches, filled with living, suffering flesh thrown together. At first it was hard to let oneself go; the general hardening, the fear of sentimentality or of ridicule, tended to put barriers between hearts; but when Moreau was laid up, his sheath of pride began to give way, and Clerambault had little difficulty in breaking through it. The best thing about this man was that false pride melted before him, for he had none of his own; people showed to him as he to them their real selves, their weakness and their troubles, which we are taught to hide from a silly idea of self-respect. Moreau had unconsciously learned to recognise at the front the superiority of men who were his social inferiors, brother-soldiers or "Non-Coms." Among these he had been much drawn to Gillot. He was glad that Clerambault should have appealed to him on behalf of his friend, for his secret wish always was to be of some use to another man.

At the next opportunity Clerambault whispered to Gillot that he ought to be optimistic for two, and cheer Moreau up; and thus each found help in the need of helping the other, according to the great principle of life: "Give, and it shall be given unto you."

No matter in what time one lives, nor what misfor-

tunes overtake one, all is not lost as long as there remains in the heart of the race a spark of manly friendship. Blow it into a flame! Draw closer these cold solitary hearts! If only one of the fruits of this war of nations could be the fusion of the best among all classes, the union of the youth of many countries—of the manual labourers and the thinkers—the future would be re-born through their mutual aid.

BUT if unity is not one wanting to dominate the other, neither is it that one prefers to be dominated. But this was precisely, however, what these young revolutionaries thought, and insisted upon, with a curious sort of self-will. They snubbed Clerambault, on the principle that intelligence should be at the service of the proletariat. . . . "Dienen, dienen . . ." which was the last word even of the proud Wagner. More than one lofty spirit brought low has said the same; if they could not rule supreme, they would serve.

Clerambault reflected: "The rarest thing is to find honest people who want to be simply my equals; but if we must choose, tyranny for tyranny, I prefer that which held the bodies of Æsop and Epictetus in slavery but left their minds free, to that which promises only material liberty and enslaves the soul."

This intolerance made him feel that he could never attach himself to any party, no matter what it was. Between the two sides, war or revolution, he could frankly state his preference for one, revolution. For it alone offered some hope for the future, which the war could only destroy. But to prefer a party does not mean that you yield to it all independence of thought. It is the error and abuse of democracies that they wish that all should have the same duties, and impose the same tasks on all; but in an advancing community there are multiple tasks. While the main body fights to gain an immediate advantage in progress, there are others who should maintain eternal values far above the victors of tomorrow or yesterday and which are beyond all the rest and throw light on the way above the smoke of battle. Clerambault had allowed himself to be too long

blinded by this smoke; he could not plunge into a fresh fight; but in this short-sighted world it is an impropriety, almost a fault to see more clearly than your neighbours.

This sardonic truth was brought home to him in a discussion with these young St. Justs. They pointed out his mistakes, impertinently enough, by comparing him to the "Astrologer who fell into the Pit":

> . . . "They said, poor creature, if your eye
> What lies beneath can hardly spy,
> Think you your gaze can pierce the sky?"

He had enough sense of humour to see the justice of the comparison; yes, he was of the number of:

> "Those whom phantoms alarm
> While some serious harm
> Threatens them or their farm."

"Even so," he said, "do you think that your republic will have no need of astronomers, just as the first one could get along without chemists? Or are they all to be mobilised? In that case there would be a good chance of your all finding yourselves together at the bottom of the well! Is that what you want? I should not object so much if it were only a question of sharing your fate, but when it comes to joining in your hatreds!"

"You have some of your own, from what I have heard," said one of the young men. Just at this moment another man came in with a newspaper in his hand and called to Clerambault:

"Congratulations, old boy, I see your enemy Bertin is dead."

The irascible journalist had died in a few hours from an attack of pneumonia. For the last six months he had pursued with fury anyone whom he suspected of working for peace, or even of wishing for it. From one step to another

he had come to look upon, not only the country, as sacred, but the war also, and among those whom he attacked most fiercely, Clerambault had a foremost place. Bertin could not pardon the resistance to his onslaughts; Clerambault's replies had at first only irritated him, but the disdainful silence with which his latest invectives had been met drove him beside himself. His swollen vanity was deeply wounded, and nothing would have satisfied him but the total annihilation of his adversary. To him Clerambault was not only a personal enemy, but a foe to the public; and in the endeavour to prove this, he made him the centre of a great pacifist plot. At any other time, this would have seemed absurd in everyone's eyes, but now no one had eyes to see with. During the last weeks Bertin's fury and violence had gone beyond anything that he had written before; they were a threat against anyone who was convicted or suspected of the dangerous heresy of Peace.

In this little reunion the news of his death was received with noisy satisfaction; and his funeral oration was preached with an energy that yielded nothing in this line to the efforts of the most famous masters. But Clerambault, absorbed in the newspaper account, scarcely seemed to hear. One of the men standing near, tapped him on the shoulder, and said:

"This ought to be a pleasure to you."

Clerambault started: "Pleasure," he said, "pleasure?"—he took his hat and went out. It was pitch dark in the street outside, all the lights having been out on account of an air-raid. Before his mind there flowered the fine clear-cut face of a boy of sixteen, with its warm pale skin and dark soft eyes, the curling hair, the mobile, smiling mouth, the tone of the sweet voice—Bertin, as he was when they first met at about the same age. Their long evening talks, the tender confidences, the discussions, the dreams . . . for in those days Bertin too was a dreamer, and even his

common-sense, his precocious irony did not protect him from impossible hopes and generous schemes for the renovation of the human race. How fair the future had appeared to their youthful eyes! And in those moments of ecstatic vision how their hearts had seemed to melt together in loving friendship. . . .

And now to see what life had made of them both! This rancorous struggle, Bertin's insane determination to trample under foot those early dreams, and the friend who still cherished them;—and he, too, Clerambault, who had let himself be carried away by the same murderous impulse, trying to render blow for blow, to draw blood from his adversary. Could it be that at the first moment, when he heard of the death of his former friend—he was horrified at himself—but did he not feel it as a relief? What is it that possesses us all? What wicked insanity that turns us against our better selves? . . .

Lost in these thoughts, he had wandered from the road, and now perceived that he was walking in the wrong direction. He could see the long arms of the search-lights stretching across the sky, hear the tremendous explosions of the Zeppelin bombs over the city, and the distant growlings of the forts in the aerial fight. The enraged people tearing each other to pieces! And to what end? That they all might be as Bertin was now, reach the extinction which awaited all men, and all countries. And those rebels who were planning more violence, other sanguinary idols to set up against the old ones, new gods of carnage that man carves for himself, in the vain hope of ennobling his deadly instincts!

Good God! Why do they not see the imbecility of their conduct, in face of the gulf that swallows up each man that dies, all humanity with him? These millions of creatures who have but a moment to live, why do they persist in making it infernal by their atrocious and absurd quarrels

about ideas; like wretches who cut each other's throats for a handful of spurious coins thrown to them? We are all victims, under the same sentence, and instead of uniting, we fight among ourselves. Poor fools! On the brow of each man that passes I can see the sweat of agony; efface it by the kiss of peace!

As he thought this, a crowd of people rushed by—men and women, shrieking with joy. "There's one of them down! One gone! The brutes are burning up!"

And the birds of prey, in the air, rejoiced in their turn over every handful of death that they scattered on the town, like gladiators dying in the arena for the pleasure of some invisible Nero.

Alas, my poor fellow-prisoners!

PART FIVE

They also serve who only stand and wait.
MILTON.

ONCE more Clerambault found himself wrapt in solitude; but this time she appeared to him as never before, calm and beautiful, kindness shining from her face, with eyes full of affection and soft cool hands which she laid on his fevered forehead. He knew that now she had chosen him for her own.

It is not given to every man to be alone; many groan under it, but with a secret pride. It is the complaint of the ages; and proves, without those who complain being aware of it, that solitude has not marked them for her own; that they are not her familiars. They have passed the outer door, and are cooling their heels in the vestibule; but they have not had patience to wait their turn to go in, or else their recriminations have kept them at a distance.

No one can penetrate to the heart of friendly solitude unless they have the gift of God's grace, or have gained the benefit of trials bravely accepted. Outside the door you must leave the dust of the road, the harsh voices and mean thoughts of the world, egotism, vanity, miserable rebellions against disappointments in love or ambition.—It must be that, like the pure Orphic shades whose golden tablets have transmitted to us their dying voices, "*The soul flees from the circle of pain*" and presents itself alone and bare "*to the chill fountain which flows from the lake of Memory.*"

This is the miracle of the resurrection; he who has cast off his mortal coil and thinks that he has lost everything, finds that he is only just entering on his true life. Not only are others as well as himself restored to him, but he

sees that up to now he has never really possessed them. Outside in the throng, how can he see over the heads of those who press about him? And it is not possible for him to look long into the eyes of those who influence him, even though they are his dearest, for they are pressed too close against him. There is no time; no perspective. We feel only that our bodies are crushed together, closely entwined by our common destiny, and tossed on the muddy torrent of multitudinous existence. Clerambault felt that he had not seen his son in any real sense until after his death; and the brief hour in which he and Rosine had recognised each other was one in which the bonds of a baleful delusion had been broken by the force of suffering.

Now that by means of successive eliminations, he had arrived at solitude, he felt withdrawn from the passions of the living, but they stood out all the more to him in a kind of lucid intimacy. All, not only his wife and children, but the millions of beings whom he had thought to embrace in an oratorical affection; they all painted themselves on the dark background. On the sombre river of destiny which sweeps humanity away, and which he had confounded with it, appeared millions of struggling living fragments—men; and each had his own personality, each was a whole world of joy and sorrow, dreams and efforts and each was I. I bend over him and it is myself I see; "I," say the eyes, and the heart repeats "I." My brothers, at last I understand you, for your faults are also mine, even to the fury with which you pursue me; I recognise that also, for it is once more I.

From this time onward Clerambault began to see men, not with the eyes in his head, but with his heart;—no longer with ideas of pacifism, or Tolstoism (*another folly*), but by seizing the thoughts of his fellows and putting himself in their place. He began to discover afresh the people around him, even those who had been most hostile to him, the intellectuals, and the politicians; and he saw plainly their wrinkles, their white hair, the bitter lines about their mouths, their bent backs, their shaky legs. . . . Overwrought, nervous, ready to break down, . . . how much they had aged in six months! The excitement of the fight had kept them up at first; but as it went on and, no matter what the issue, the ruin became plain; each one had his griefs, and each feared to lose the little—but that little, infinitely precious—remained to him. They tried to hide their agony, and clenched their teeth, but all suffered. Doubt had begun to undermine the most confident, "Hush, not a word! it will kill me if you speak of it." . . . Clerambault, full of pity, thought of Madame Mairet; he must hold his tongue in future;—but it was too late, they all knew now what he thought, and he was a living negation and remorse to them. Many hated him, but Clerambault no longer resented it; he was almost ready to help them to restore their lost illusions.

These souls were full of a passionate faith which they felt to be threatened; and this lent them a quality of tragic, pitiable greatness. With the politicians this was complicated by the absurd trappings of theatrical declamation; with the intellectuals by the obstinacy of mania; but in spite of all, the wounds were visible, you could hear the cry

of the heart that clings to belief, that calls for an heroic delusion.

This faith was very touching in some young and simple people; no declamations, no pretensions to knowledge; only the desperate clinging of a devotion which has given all, and in return asks for one word only: "It is true. . . . Thou, my belovéd, my Country, power divine, still livest, to whom I have offered up my life, and all that I loved!"—One could kneel before those poor little black gowns, before those mothers, wives and sisters; one longed to kiss the thin hands that trembled with the hope and fear of the hereafter, and say: "Mourn not,—for ye shall be comforted."

What consolation can one offer, when one does not believe in the ideal for which they lived, and which is killing them?—The long-sought answer finally came to Clerambault, almost unconsciously: "You must care for men more than for illusion, or even for truth."

CLERAMBAULT'S warm feelings were not reciprocated; and he was more attacked than ever, though for some months he had published nothing. In the autumn of 1917 the anger against him had risen to an unheard-of height. The disproportion was really laughable between this rage and the feeble words of one man, but it was so all over the world. A dozen or so weak pacifists, alone, surrounded, without means of being heard through any paper of standing, spoke honestly but not loudly, and this let loose a perfect frenzy of insults and threats. At the slightest contradiction the monster Opinion fell into an epileptic fit.

The prudent Perrotin who, as a rule, was surprised at nothing, kept quiet, and let Clerambault ruin himself his own way; but even he was alarmed by this explosion of tyrannical stupidity. In history and at a distance it could be laughed at; but close at hand it looked as if the human brain was about to give way. Why is it that in this war men lost their mental balance more than in any other at any previous time? Has the war been really more atrocious? That is either childish nonsense, or a deliberate forgetfulness of what has happened in our own day, under our eyes; in Armenia, in the Balkans; during the repression of the Commune, in colonial wars under new conquistadors in China and the Congo. . . . Of all animals we know, the human beast has always been the most ferocious. Then is it because men had more faith in the war of today? Surely not. The western peoples had reached the point of evolution when war seemed so absurd that we could no longer practise it and preserve our reason.

We are obliged to intoxicate ourselves, to go crazy, unless we would die the despairing death of darkest pessimism;

and that is why the voice of one sane man threw into fits of rage all the others who wanted to forget; they were afraid that this voice would wake them up, and that they would find themselves sobered, disgraced, and without a rag to cover them.

It was all the worse because at this time the war was going badly and the fine hopes of victory and glory which had been lighted up so many times were beginning to die out. It began to be probable, no matter which way you looked at it, that the war would be a failure for everybody. Neither interest, nor ambition, nor ideals would get anything out of it, and the bitter useless sacrifice, seen at close range, with nothing gained, made men who felt themselves responsible, furious. They were forced either to accuse themselves or throw the blame on others, and the choice was quickly made. The disaster was attributed to all those who had foreseen the defeat and tried to prevent it. Every retreat of the army, every diplomatic blunder found an excuse in the machinations of the pacifists, and these unpopular gentry to whom no one listened were invested by their opponents with the formidable power of organising defeat. In order that none should be ignorant of this, a writing was hung about their necks with the word "Defeatist," like their brother-heretics of the good old days; all that remained was to burn them, and if the executioner was not at hand there were at least plenty of assistants.

At first, by way of getting their hand in, the authorities picked out inoffensive people—women, teachers, anyone who was little known and unable to defend himself; and then they turned their attention to something bigger. It was a good chance for a politician to rid himself of a dangerous rival, of anyone possessed of secrets or likely to rise in the future. Above all, according to the old receipts, they took care to mix accusations, throwing into the same bag vulgar sharpers and those whose character and mind made

them uneasy, so that in all this mess the blindfolded public did not attempt to distinguish between an honest man and a scamp. In this way those who were not sufficiently compromised by their actions found themselves involved in those of their associates; and if these were lacking, the authorities stood ready, if necessary, to supply them made to order to fit the accusation.

When Xavier Thouron first came to see Clerambault how could anyone know if he was in the Secret Service? He might very well have come of his own accord; and it was impossible to say what his intentions were, perhaps he hardly knew himself? In the purlieus of a great city there are always unscrupulous adventurers rushing about seeking whom they may devour. They have ravenous appetites, and curiosity to match, and anything will do to fill up this aching void. They are willing to say black is white; all is grist that comes to their mill, and they are capable of throwing you into the water one minute and jumping in to save you the next. They are not too careful of their skins, but the animal inside has to be fed and amused. If he stopped making faces and stuffing for one moment, he might die of boredom and disgust at his own vacancy; but he is too clever for that, he will not stop to think until he dies—splendidly, on his feet, like the Roman Emperor.

No one could have told Thouron's real object when he went for the first time to Clerambault's house. As usual he was very busy, excited and on the scent of he knew not what. He was one of those great journalists—they are rare in the profession—who, without taking the trouble to read a thing, can give you a vivid, brilliant account of it, which often, by a miracle, proves to be fairly just. He said his little "piece" to Clerambault without too many mistakes, and appeared to believe it; perhaps he did while the words were on his lips. Why not? He was a sort of pacifist himself from time to time; it depended on the direction of the

wind, or the attitude of certain of his brother-writers whom he sometimes followed, and occasionally opposed. Clerambault could never cure himself of a childlike trust in anyone who came to him, and he allowed himself to be touched;—besides, the press of his country had not spoiled him of late, so he poured out the inmost thoughts of his heart, while Thouron took it all in with the deepest interest.

An acquaintance thus closely formed could not, of course, stop there; letters were exchanged, in which one spoke, and the other led him on. Thouron persuaded Clerambault to put his ideas in the form of little popular pamphlets, which he undertook to distribute among the working classes. Clerambault hesitated, and refused at first. The partisans of the reigning order and injustice pretend hypocritically to disapprove of the secret propaganda of a new truth; Clerambault saw no harm in it, when no other way was possible. (All persecuted faiths have their catacombs.) But he did not feel himself suited to such a course of action. It was more his part to say what he thought and take the consequences, and he felt sure that the word would spread of itself, without his hawking it about. He would have blushed to admit it, but perhaps a secret instinct held him back from the offers of service made him by this eager "drummer." But he could not altogether restrain his zeal. Thouron published in his paper a sort of Apologia for Clerambault. He told of his visits, and their conversations; and he explained and paraphrased the thoughts of the poet. Clerambault was astonished when he read them, he hardly knew his own ideas again, but nevertheless, he could not altogether deny them, for, buried among Thouron's commentaries, he found literal and accurate quotations from his letters. These, however, were even more confusing; the same words and phrases, grafted on other contexts, took on an accent and a colour that he had not given them. Add that the censor, in his zeal for the safety of the country,

had tampered with the quotations, cutting out here and there a word, half a line, or the end of a paragraph—all perfectly innocent, but this suppression suggested the worst iniquities to the over-excited mind of the reader. All this was like oil on the flame, and the effect was soon felt. Clerambault did not know which way to turn to keep his champion quiet; and yet he could not be angry with him, for Thouron had his share of threats and insults; but he was used to things of this kind, and they fell from him, like water off a duck's back.

After this common experience Thouron claimed special rights over Clerambault; and having tried without success to make him buy shares in his newspaper, he put him on the list of honourary members, without his knowledge, and thought it very strange that Clerambault was not delighted when he found it out a few weeks later. Their relations were slightly cooled by this incident, but Thouron continued to parade the name of his "distinguished friend" from time to time in his articles. The latter let this go on, thinking himself fortunate to get off so easily. He had rather lost sight of him, when he heard one day that Thouron had been arrested. He was implicated in a rather shabby money affair which was as usual ascribed to plots of the enemy. The Courts following the lead of those "higher-up" could not fail to find a connection between these shady transactions and Thouron's so-called pacifism. This had showed itself in his paper, in an irregular incoherent way, subject to attacks of "Exterminism," but none the less it was all supposed to be part of the great "defeatist" scheme, and the examination of his correspondence allowed the authorities to drag in anyone they chose. As he had carefully kept every letter, from men of all shades of opinion, there were plenty to choose from and they soon found what they wanted.

It was only through the papers that Clerambault heard

that he was on the list, and they breathed a triumphant: "At last we have got him." . . . All was now clear, for if a man thinks differently from the rest of the world, is it not plain as daylight that there must be some low motive underneath it all? Seek and you will find. . . . They had found, and without going further, one Paris newspaper announced the "treason" of Clerambault. There was no trace of this in the indictment; but justice does not feel that it is her business to correct people's mistakes. Clerambault was summoned before the magistrate, and begged in vain to be told of what offence he was accused. The judge was polite, showing him the consideration due to a man of his notoriety, but seemed in no haste to dismiss the case; it almost looked as if he was waiting for something . . . for what? Why for the crime, of course!

Madame Clerambault had not the temper of a Roman matron, nor even of that high-spirited Jewess in the celebrated affair which cut France in two some twenty years ago, who clung more closely to her husband on account of the public injustice. She had the timid instinctive respect of the French *bourgeoisie* for the official verdict. Though she knew that there were no grounds for the accusation against Clerambault, she felt that it was a disgrace to be accused, which also affected her, and this she could not bear in silence. Unfortunately, in replying to her reproaches, Clerambault took the worst possible line, without meaning it, for instead of trying to defend himself, he only said:

"My poor wife, it is awfully hard on you. . . . Yes, you are right," and then waited till the shower was over. But this tone upset Madame Clerambault, who was furious because she felt she had no hold on her husband. She knew perfectly that though he appeared to agree with her she could not turn him from his course of action. Despairing of success, she went off to pour her troubles into the ears of her brother. Leo Camus made no attempt to disguise his opinion that the best thing she could do was to get a divorce, which he represented to her as a duty. This, however, was going a little too far; she was, after all, a respectable *bourgeoise,* and the traditional horror of divorce re-awakened her profound fidelity and made her think the remedy worse than the disease; so they remained united on the surface, but intimacy between them was gone.

Rosine was out nearly all day, for in order to forget her unhappiness she was taking a course in trained nursing, and she passed a large part of her time away from home. Even

when she was at home her thoughts seemed far away, and Clerambault had never regained his former place in his daughter's heart; another filled it now—Daniel. She treated her father coldly; he was the cause of her separation from the man of her heart, and this was a way of punishing him. And though she was too just not to reproach herself, still she could not alter; injustice is sometimes a consolation.

Daniel had not forgotten, any more than Rosine; he was not proud of his conduct, but it rather softened his remorse to throw the blame on his surroundings, on the tyrannical opinion which had coerced him; but in his heart he was discontented with himself.

Accident came to the assistance of this sulking pair of lovers. Daniel was seriously but not dangerously wounded, and was evacuated back to Paris. During his convalescence he was walking one day near the square of the Bon Marché when he saw Rosine. He stood still a moment but as she came forward, without hesitation, they went on into the Square and began a long conversation, which, beginning by embarrassment, and interrupted by numerous reproaches and avowals, led finally to a perfect understanding between them. They were so absorbed in their tender explanations, that they did not see Madame Clerambault when she came near, and the good lady, overcome by this unexpected meeting, hurried home to tell the news to her husband. In spite of their estrangement, she could not keep this to herself. He listened to her indignant recital, for she could not bear that her daughter should have anything to do with a man whose family had affronted them; and when she had finished he said nothing at first, according to his present habit, until at last he shook his head smiling, and said:

"Good enough."

Madame Clerambault stopped short, shrugged her shoulders, turned to go, but with her hand on the door of her room she looked back and said:

"These people insulted you; Rosine and you agreed to have nothing more to do with them, and now, *your daughter* is making advances to this man who has refused her, and you say it is 'good enough.' I can't understand you any longer, you must be out of your mind."

Clerambault tried to show her that his daughter's happiness did not consist in agreement with his ideas, and that Rosine was quite right to get rid of the consequences of his foolishness where they affected herself.

"Your foolishness . . . that is the first word of sense that you have said in years."

"You see yourself that I am right," said he, and made her promise to let Rosine arrange her romance as she pleased.

The girl was radiant when she came in, but she said nothing of what had passed. Madame Clerambault held her tongue with great difficulty, and the father saw with tender amusement the happiness that shone once more on the face of his child. He did not know exactly what had happened, but he guessed that Rosine had thrown him and his ideas overboard—sweetly of course, but still,—the lovers had made it up at their parents' expense, and both had blamed with admirable justice the old people's exaggerations on either side. The years in the trenches had emancipated Daniel from the narrow fanaticism of his family, without impairing his patriotism, and Rosine in exchange had gently admitted that her father had been mistaken. They agreed with little difficulty, for she was naturally calm and fatalistic, which suited perfectly with Daniel's stoical acceptance of things as they were. They had decided, therefore, to go through life together, without paying any more attention to the disagreements of those who had come before them, as the saying is—though it would be more exact to say, those whom they were leaving behind them. The future also troubled them little; like millions of other

human beings they only asked their share of happiness at the moment and shut their eyes to everything else.

Madame Clerambault was annoyed that her daughter said nothing of the events of the morning, and soon went out again; Rosine and her father sat dreamily, he by the window, smoking, and she with an unread magazine before her. She looked absently about the room, with happy eyes, trying to recall the details of the scene between her and Daniel; her glance fell on her father's weary face, and its melancholy expression struck her sharply. She got up, and standing behind him, laid her hand on his shoulder and said, with a little sigh of compassion that tried to conceal her inward joy:

"Poor little Papa!"

Clerambault looked at Rosine, whose eyes, in spite of herself, shone with happiness:

"And my little girl is not 'poor' any longer, is she?"

Rosine blushed: "Why do you say that?" she asked.

Clerambault only shook his head at her, and she leaned forward laying her cheek against his:

"She is no longer poor," he repeated.

"No," she whispered, "she is very, very rich."

"Tell me about this fortune of hers?"

"She has—first of all—her dear Papa."

"Oh, you little fraud!" said Clerambault, trying to move so that he could see her face, but Rosine put her hands over his eyes:

"No, I don't want you to look at me, or say anything to me. . . ." She kissed him again, and said caressingly:

"Poor dear little Papa."

Rosine had now escaped from the cares that weighed on the house, and it was not long before she flew away from the nest altogether, for she had passed her examinations and was sent to a hospital in the South. Both the Clerambaults felt painfully the loss to their empty fireside.

But the man was not the more lonely of the two. He knew this and was sincerely sorry for his wife, who had not either the strength of mind to follow his path, nor to leave him. As for him he felt that now, no matter what happened, he would never be bereft of sympathy; persecution would arouse it, and lead the most reserved people to express their feeling. A very precious evidence of this came to him at this time.

One day, when he was alone in the apartment, the bell rang and he went to open the door. A lady was there whom he did not know; she held out a letter, mentioning her name as she did so; in the dim light of the vestibule, she had taken him for the servant, but at once saw her mistake, as he tried to persuade her to come in. "No," said she, "I am only a messenger," and she went away; but when she had gone he found a little bunch of violets that she had laid on a table near the door. The letter was as follows:

"*Tu ne cede malis,*
sed contra audentior ito . . .

"You fight for us, and our hearts are with you. Pour out your troubles to us, and I will give you my hope, my strength, and my love. I am one who can act only through you."

The youthful ardour of these last mysterious words, touched and puzzled Clerambault. He tried to remember the lady as she stood on his threshold; she was not very young; fine features, grave dark eyes in a worn face. Where had he seen her before? The fugitive impression faded as he tried to hold it.

He saw her again two or three days later, not far from him in the Luxembourg Gardens. She walked on and as he crossed the path to meet her she stopped and waited for him. He thanked her, and asked why she had gone away so quickly the other day, without saying who she was. And as he spoke it came to him that he had known her for a long time. He used to see her formerly in the Luxembourg, or in the neighbouring streets, with a tall boy who must have been her son. Every time they passed each other their eyes used to meet with a half-smile of respectful recognition. And though he did not know their name, and they had never exchanged a word, they were to him part of those friendly shadows which throng about our daily life, not always noticed when they are there, but which leave a gap when they disappear.

At once his thought leaped from the woman before him to the young companion whom he missed from her side. In these days of mourning you could never tell who might be still in the land of the living, but he cried impulsively:

"It was your son who wrote to me?"

"Yes," said she, "he is a great admirer of yours. We have both felt drawn to you for a long time."

"He must come to see me."

"He cannot do that."

"Why not? Is he at the Front?"

"No, he is here." After a moment's silence, Clerambault asked:

"Has he been wounded?"

"Would you like to see him?" said the mother. Cler-

ambault walked beside her in silence, not daring to ask any questions, but at last he said: "You are fortunate at least that you can have him near you always. . . ." She understood and held out her hand: "We were always very close to one another," she said, and Clerambault repeated:

"At least he is near you."

"I have his soul," she answered.

They had now reached the house, an old seventeenth century dwelling in one of the narrow ancient streets between the Luxembourg and St. Sulpice, where the pride of old France still subsists in retirement. The great door was shut even at this hour. Madame Froment passed in ahead of Clerambault, went up two or three steps at the back of a paved court, and entered the apartment on the ground floor.

"Dear Edmé," said she, as she opened the door of the room, "I have a surprise for you, guess what it is. . . ."

CLERAMBAULT saw a young man looking at him as he lay extended on a couch. The fair youthful face lit up by the setting sun, with its intelligent eyes, looked so healthy and calm that at first sight the thought of illness did not present itself.

"You! " he exclaimed. "You here? "

He looked younger than ever with this joyful surprise on his face, but neither the body, nor the arms which were covered, moved in the least, and Clerambault coming nearer saw that the head alone seemed to be alive.

"Mamma, you have been giving me away," said Edmé Froment.

"Did you not want to see me? " said Clerambault, bending over him.

"That is not just what I meant, but I am not very anxious to be seen."

"Why not? I should like to know," said Clerambault, in a tone which he tried to make gay.

"Because a man does not ask visitors to the house when he is not there himself."

"Where are you? " if one may ask.

"I could almost swear that I was shut up in an old Egyptian mummy"—he glanced at the bed and his immovable body:

"There is no life left in it," he said.

"You have more life than any of us," said a voice beside them. Clerambault looked up and saw on the other side of the couch a tall young man full of health and strength, who seemed to be about the same age as Edmé, who smiled and said to Clerambault: "My friend Chastenay has enough vitality to lend me some and to spare."

"If that were only literally true," said the other, and the two friends exchanged an affectionate glance. Chastenay continued:

"I should in that case only be giving back a part of what I owe you." Then turning to Clerambault, he added: "He is the one who keeps us all up, is it not so, Madame Fanny?"

"Indeed yes, I could not do without my strong son," said the mother tenderly.

"They take advantage of the fact that I cannot defend myself," said Edmé to Clerambault. "You see I cannot stir an inch."

"Was it a wound?"

"Paralysis."—Clerambault did not dare to ask for details, but after a pause: "Do you suffer much?" he inquired.

"I ought to wish that it were so perhaps; for pain is a tie between us and the shore. However, I confess that I prefer the silence of this body in which I am encased . . . let us say no more about it. . . . My mind at least is free. And if it is not true that it '*agitat molem,*' it does often escape."

"I know," said Clerambault, "it came to see me the other day."

"Not for the first time; it has been there before."

"And I who thought myself deserted!"

"Do you recall," said Edmé, "the words of Randolph to Cecil?—'*The voice of a man alone can in one hour put more life into us than the clang of five hundred trumpets sounded continuously.*'"

"That always reminds me of you," said Chastenay, but Edmé went on as if he had not heard him: . . . "You have waked us all up."

Clerambault looked at the brave calm eyes of the paralytic, and said:

" Your eyes do not look as if they needed to be waked."

" They do not need it now," said Edmé, " the farther off one is, the better one sees; but when I was close to everything I saw very little."

" Tell me what you see now."

" It is getting late," said Edmé, " and I am rather tired. Will you come another time? "

" Tomorrow, if you will let me."

As Clerambault went out Chastenay joined him. He felt the need of confiding to a heart that could feel the pain and grandeur of the tragedy of which his friend had been at once the hero and the victim. Edmé Froment had been struck on the spinal column by an exploding shell. Young as he was, he was one of the intellectual leaders of his generation, handsome, ardent, eloquent, overflowing with life and visions, loving and beloved, nobly ambitious, and all at once, at a blow,—a living death! His mother who had centred all her pride and love on him now saw him condemned for the rest of his days to this terrible fate. They had both suffered terribly, but each hid it from the other, and this effort kept them up. They took great pride in each other. She had all the care of him, washed and fed him like a little child, and he kept calm for her sake, and sustained her on the wings of his spirit.

" Ah," said Chastenay, " it makes one feel ashamed—when I think that I am alive and well, that I can reach out my arms to life, that I can run and leap, and draw this blessed air into my lungs. . . ." As he spoke he stretched out his arms, raised his head, and breathed deeply.

" I ought to feel remorseful," he added, lowering his voice, " and the worst is that I do not." Clerambault could not help smiling.

" It is not very heroic," continued Chastenay, " and yet I care more for Froment than for anyone on earth, and his

fate makes me wretchedly unhappy. But all the same, when I think of my luck to be here at this moment when so many are gone, and to be well and sound, I can hardly keep from showing how glad I am. It is so good to live and be whole. Poor Edmé! . . . You must think me terribly selfish? "

" No, what you say is perfectly natural and healthy. If we were all as sincere as you, humanity would not be the victim of the wicked notion of glory in suffering. You have every right to enjoy life after the trials you have passed through," and as he spoke he touched the Croix de Guerre which the young man wore on his breast.

" I have been through them and I am going back," said Chastenay, " but there is no merit in that; there is nothing else that I can do. I am not trying to deceive you and pretend that I love to smell powder; you cannot go through three years of war, and still want to run risks and be indifferent to danger, even if you did feel like that in the beginning. I was so—I may frankly say I did go in for heroism; but I have lost all that, it was really part ignorance and part rhetoric, and when one is rid of these, the nonsense of the war, the idiotic slaughter, the ugliness, the horrible useless sacrifice must be clear to the narrowest mind. If it is not manly to fly from the inevitable, it is not necessary either to go in search of what can be avoided. The great Corneille was a hero behind the lines; those whom I have known at the front were almost heroes in spite of themselves."

" That is the true heroism," said Clerambault.

" That is Froment's kind," said Chastenay. " He is a hero because there is nothing else that he can be, not even a man; but the dearest thing about him is, that in spite of everything, he is a real man."

THE truth of this remark was abundantly evident to Clerambault in a long conversation that he had with Froment the next day. If the courage of the young man did not desert him in the ruin of his life, it was all the more to his credit, as he had never professed to be an apostle of self-abnegation. He had had great hopes and robust ambitions, fully justified by his talents and vigorous youth, but unlike his friend Chastenay, he had never for a moment cherished any illusions as to the war.

The disastrous folly of it had been clear to him at once, and this he owed not only to his own penetrating mind, but to that inspiring angel who, from his earliest infancy, had woven the soul of her son from her own pure spirit.

Whenever Clerambault went to see Edmé, Madame Froment was almost always there; but she kept in the background, sitting at the window with her work, only stopping occasionally to throw a tender glance at her son. She was not a woman of exceptional cleverness, but she had what may be called the intelligence of the heart, and her mind had been cultivated by the influence of her husband—a distinguished physician much older than herself. Thus it had happened that her whole life had been filled by these two profound feelings, an almost filial love for her husband and a more passionate sentiment for her son.

Dr. Froment, a cultivated man with much originality of mind which he concealed under a grave courtesy, as if he feared to wound others by his distinction, had travelled all over Europe, as well as in Egypt, Persia, and India. He had been a student of science and of religion, and his special interest had been the new forms of faith appearing in the world; such as Babism, Christian Science, and

theosophical doctrines. As he had kept in touch with the pacifist movement, and was a friend of Baroness Suttner, whom he had known in Vienna, he had long seen the catastrophe approaching which threatened him and all he loved. But man of courage as he was, and accustomed to the indifference of nature, he had not tried to delude his family as to the future, but had rather sought to strengthen their souls to meet the danger that hung over their heads.

More than all his words, his example was sacred to his wife, for the son had been yet a child at the time of his father's death. Dr. Froment had suffered from a cancer of the intestines, and during the whole course of the slow and painful disease he had followed his ordinary occupations up to the last minute, sustaining the courage of his loved ones by this serene fortitude.

This noble picture which dwelt in Madame Froment's heart, and which she worshipped in secret, was to her what religion is to other women. To this, though she had no clear belief in the future life, she prayed, especially in difficult moments, as if to an ever-present helpful friend. And by a singular phenomenon sometimes observed after death, the essence of her husband's soul seemed to have passed into hers. For this reason her son had grown up in an atmosphere of placid thought, while most of the young generation before 1914 were feverish, restless, aggressive, irritated by delay. When the war broke out, there was no need for Madame Froment to protect herself or her son against the national excesses; they were both strangers to such ideas; but they made no attempt to resist the inevitable; they had watched the coming of this misfortune for so long! All that they could do now was to bear it bravely, while trying to preserve what was the most precious thing to them; their souls' faith. Madame Froment did not consider it necessary to be "*Au-dessus de la mêlée*" in order to lead it; and she accomplished in her limited sphere

simply, but more efficaciously, what was attempted by writers in Germany and England,—a form of international reconciliation. She had kept in touch with many old friends, and without being troubled in circles infected by the war-spirit, or ever undertaking useless demonstrations against the war, she was a check on insane manifestations of hatred, by her simple presence, her quiet words and manner, her good judgment, and the respect inspired by her kindness. In families that were sympathetic she distributed messages from liberal Europeans, among others, Clerambault's articles, though without his knowledge. It was a source of satisfaction when she saw that their hearts were touched. A greater joy still was to see that her son himself was transformed.

Edmé Froment was not in the least a Tolstoyan pacifist. At first he thought the war more a folly than a crime, and if he had been free, he would have withdrawn, like Perrotin, into high dilettantism of art and thought, without attempting the hopeless task of fighting the prevailing opinion, for which he then felt more contempt than pity. Since his forced participation in the war, he had been obliged to acknowledge that this folly was so largely expiated by suffering that it would be superfluous to add anything to it. Man had made his own hell upon earth, and there was no need of further condemnation. He was on leave, at Paris, when he came across Clerambault's articles which showed him that there was something better for him to do than to set himself up as a judge of his companions in misery; that it would be far nobler to try to deliver them while taking his share of the common burden.

The young disciple was disposed to go farther than his master. Clerambault, who was naturally affectionate and rather weak, found his joy in communion with other men, and suffered even when divided in spirit from their errors. He was a confirmed self-doubter. He was prone to look in

the eyes of the crowd for agreement with his ideas. He exhausted himself in futile efforts to reconcile his inward beliefs with the aspirations and the social struggles of his time. Froment, who had the soul of a chieftain in a helpless body, dauntlessly maintained that for him who bears the torch of a lofty ideal it is an absolute duty to hold it high over the heads of his comrades; that it would be wrong to confuse it in the other illuminations. The common-place of democracies that Voltaire had less wit than Mr. Everybody is nonsense. . . . "*Democritus ait; Unus mihi pro populo est.* . . . To me an individual is as good as a thousand." . . . Our modern faith sees in the social group the summit of human evolution, but where is the proof? Froment thought the greatest height was reached in an individual superiority. Millions of men have lived and died to produce one perfect flower of thought, for such are the superb and prodigal ways of nature. She spends whole peoples to make a Jesus, a Buddha, an Æschylus, a Vinci, a Newton, or a Beethoven; but without these men, what would the people have been? Or humanity itself? We do not hold with the egotist ideal of the Superman. A man who is great is great for all his fellows; his individuality expresses and often guides millions of others; it is the incarnation of their secret forces, of their highest desires; it concentrates and realises them. The sole fact that a man was Christ, has exalted and lifted generations of humanity, filling them with the divine energy; and though nineteen centuries have since passed, millions have not ceased to aspire to the height of this example, though none has attained to it.

Thus understood, the ideal individualist is more productive for human society than the ideal communist, who would lead us to the mechanical perfection of the bee-hive, and at the very least he is indispensable as corrective and complement.

This proud individualism, stated by Froment with burning eloquence, was a support to Clerambault's mind, prone to waver, and undecided from good-nature, self-distrust, and the wish to understand others.

Froment rendered Clerambault another important service. More in the current of world-thought, and through his family coming in closer contact with foreign thinkers, an accomplished linguist besides, Froment could bring to mind those other men in all nations who, great in their isolation, fought for the right to a free conscience. It was a consoling spectacle; all the work under the surface of thought suppressed, but struggling towards truth, and the knowledge that the worst tyranny that has crushed the soul of humanity since the Inquisition has failed to stifle the indomitable will to remain free and true.

No doubt these lofty individualities were rare, but their power was all the greater; the fine outline was more striking, seen against the dark horizon. In the fall of the nations to the foot of the precipice where millions lie in a shapeless mass, their voices seemed to rise with the only human note, and their action gained emphasis from the anger with which it was met. A century ago Chateaubriand wrote:

"It is vain to struggle longer; henceforward the only important thing is to be."

He did not know that "to be" in our time, be oneself, be free, implies the greatest of combats. Those who are true to themselves dominate through the levelling down of the rest.

CLERAMBAULT was not the only one to feel the benefit of of Froment's energy, for at his bedside he was sure to find some friend who came, perhaps without admitting it, more to get comfort than to bring it. Two or three of these were young, about Edmé's age, the others, men over fifty, old friends of the family, or those who had known Froment before the war.

One of these had been his professor, an old Hellenist, with a sweet absent smile. Then there was a grey-haired sculptor, his face ploughed by deep tragic lines; a country gentleman, clean-shaved, red-cheeked, with the massive head of an old peasant; and finally a doctor. He had a white beard, his face was worn and kind, and you were struck by the strange expression of his eyes; one seemed to look sharply at you, and the other was sad and dreamy.

There was little resemblance between these men who sometimes met at the invalid's house. All shades of thought could be found in the group, from the Catholic to the freethinker and the bolshevist—one of Froment's young friends professed to be of this opinion. In them you could find the traces of the most various intellectual ancestry; the ironic Lucian appeared in the old professor; the Count de Coulanges was wont to solace himself in the evenings on his estate with cattle and fertiliser, but also revelled in the gorgeous texture of Froissart's style, like cloth of gold, and the countrified, juicy talk of that rascal Gondi—the count certainly had the old French chroniclers in his veins. The sculptor wrinkled his brow in the effort to find metaphysics in Rodin and Beethoven; and Dr. Verrier had a streak of the marvellous in his disposition. This he satisfied by the hypotheses of biology, and the won-

ders of modern chemistry, though he would glance at the paradise of religion with the disenchanted smile of the man of science. He bore his part in the sad trials of the time, but the era of war with all its gory glory faded for him before the heroic discoveries of thought made by a new Newton, the German Einstein, in the midst of the general distraction.

These men all differed in the form of their minds and in their temperament; but they all agreed in this, they belonged to no party, each thought for himself, and each respected and loved liberty in himself or in others. What else mattered? In our day, all the old framework is broken down; religious, political, or social. It is but small progress if we call ourselves socialists, or republicans, rather than monarchists, if these castes accept nationalism of State, faith, or class. There are now only two sorts of minds: those shut up behind bars, and those open to all that is alive, to the entire race of man, even our enemies. These men, few though they may be, compose the true "International" which rests on the worship of truth and universal life. They know well that they are each too weak to embrace alone their great ideal, but it is infinite and can embrace them all. United in one object, they push on by their separate ways towards the unknown God.

These independent spirits were all drawn towards Edmé Froment at this time, because they obscurely saw in him the point where they could meet, the clearing from which every path in the forest is visible. Froment had not always tried to bring others together; as long as he was well and strong, he too had taken his own way, but since his course had been cut short, after a time of bitter despondency of which he said nothing, he had placed himself at the cross-roads. As he could not possibly act himself, he was better able to view the whole field and take part in spirit. He saw the different currents: country, revolution, contests between

states and classes, science and faith—like a stream's conflicting forces, with its rapids, whirlpools, and reefs; it may sometimes slacken, or turn its course, but it always flows on irresistibly (even reaction is carried forward). And he, the poor youth staked at his cross-roads, took all these currents unto him, the entire stream.

Edmé reminded Clerambault sometimes of Perrotin, but he and Froment were worlds apart. The latter also denied nothing of what is, and wished to understand everything; but his was a fiery spirit, his whole soul was filled with ordered movement and feeling; with him all life and death went forward and upward. And his body lay there motionless.

It was a dark hour; the turn of the year 1917-18. In the foggy winter nights men waited for the supreme onslaught of the German armies, which rumour had foretold for months past; the Gotha raids on Paris had already begun. Those who wanted to fight to the end pretended confidence, the papers kept on boasting, and Clemenceau had never slept better in his life. But the tension showed in the increasing bitterness of feeling among civilians. The agonised public turned on the suspects among them, the defeatists and the pacifists, and for days at a time the baying of an accusing public pursued these miserable creatures and hunted them down. And spies swarmed of all sorts, patriotic denouncers, half-crazed witnesses. When towards the end of March the long-threatened great offensive against Paris began, the "sacred" fury between fellow-citizens reached its height, and there is no doubt that if the invasion had succeeded, before the Germans had arrived at the gates of the city, the gallows at Vincennes, that altar of the country's vengeance, would have known many victims, innocent or guilty, accused or condemned.

Clerambault was often shouted at in the streets, but he was not alarmed; perhaps because he did not realise the danger. One day Moreau found him in a group of people disputing with an excited young man who had spoken to him in a most insulting manner. While they were talking the shell from a "Big Bertha" exploded close by. Clerambault took no notice, and went on quietly explaining his position to the angry young man. There was something positively comic in this obstinacy, and the circle of listeners was quick to feel it, like true Frenchmen, and began to exchange jokes not entirely of a refined nature, but perfectly

good-natured. Moreau caught hold of Clerambault's arm and tried to drag him away, but he stopped, and looking at the laughing crowd, the absurdity of the situation struck him in his turn, and he too burst out laughing.

"What an old fool I am!" said he to Moreau, who was still intent on getting him away.

"You had better look out, for you are not the only fool in this town," was the somewhat impertinent answer, but Clerambault would not understand what he meant.

The case against him had entered on a new phase; he was now accused of infraction of the law of the 5th of August, 1914—"An act to repress indiscretions in time of war." He was accused of pacifist propaganda among the working classes, where it was said that Thouron had distributed Clerambault's writings with the consent of the author; but there was no foundation for this, as Thouron was in a position to testify that Clerambault had no knowledge of such propaganda, and had certainly not authorised it.

It appeared, however, singularly enough, that Thouron would not swear to anything of the sort. His attitude was strange, for, instead of stating the facts, he equivocated as if he had something to hide; it almost looked as if he wished this to be noticed, which would have aroused suspicions if he had not been so careful. Unfortunately these suspicions seemed to glance at Clerambault, though he said nothing against him or against anyone; in fact he refused to tell anything, but he let it be understood that if he chose . . . but he did not choose. Clerambault was confronted with him, and his attitude was perfect, really chivalrous. He laid his hand on his heart and declared that he had the admiration of a son for the great "Master," and "Friend," and when Clerambault, getting impatient, begged him to state simply just what had passed between them, the other would do nothing but protest his "undying

devotion." He would rather say nothing more; he had nothing to add to his testimony; it was all his fault.

He left with an increased reputation, while Clerambault was supposed to have sheltered himself behind his devoted henchman. The press unhesitatingly accused Clerambault of cowardice, and meanwhile the case dragged on, Clerambault appearing every day to answer useless questions, with no decision in sight. It might have been supposed that a man accused without proofs, and subject for so long to injurious suspicions, would have been entitled to the sympathy of the public; but on the contrary everyone was more down on him than before; they blamed him because he was not already convicted. All sorts of absurd stories were in circulation about him; it was asserted that experts had discovered through the shape of some letters misprinted in a pamphlet of Clerambault's that it had come from a German press, and this humbug was readily swallowed by men who were supposed to be intelligent, before the war,—only four years ago, but it seemed centuries.

So all these worthy folks passed sentence on a fellow-citizen on the slightest information; it was not the first time, and it will not be the last. The best opinion was indignant that he should still be at liberty, and reactionary papers, fearing that their prey would escape, tried to intimidate justice by loud accusations, and demanded that the case should be removed from the civil court and brought before a court-martial. This excitement soon developed into one of those paroxysms which in Paris are generally brief but violent; for this sensible people does go crazy periodically. It may be asked why men who are kind for the most part, and naturally given to mutual tolerance, not to say indifference, should have these explosions of furious fanaticism, when they seem to lose all feeling as well as common-sense. Some will tell you that this people is feminine in its virtues, as well as in its vices, that the delicate nerves and fine sen-

sibility which cause it to excel in matters of taste and art also make it susceptible to attacks of hysteria, but I am of opinion that any people is manly only by accident, if by a man you mean a reasonable creature—a flattering but baseless idea. Men only use their reason from time to time, and are soon worn out by the effort of thinking; so those do them a favour who act for them, encouraging them in the direction of the least effort, and not much is required to hate a new idea. Do not condemn them; the Friend of all who are persecuted has said with His heroic indulgence: "They know not what they do."

An active nationalist newspaper was eager in stirring up the evil instincts that lay below the surface. It lived on the exploitation of hatred and suspicion, which it called "working for the regeneration of France,"—France being reduced to this paper and its friends. It published "Clerambоche," a collection of sanguinary articles, like those which succeeded so well against Jaurés; it roused people by declaring that the traitor owed his safety to occult influences, and that he would make his escape, if he were not carefully watched; and finally it appealed to popular justice.

VICTOR VAUCOUX hated Clerambault; not that he knew him at all; it is not necessary to know a man in order to hate him; but if he had known him he would have detested him still more. He was his born enemy before he even knew that Clerambault existed. There are races among minds more antagonistic to each other, in all countries, than those divided by a different skin or uniform.

He was a well-to-do *bourgeois* from the west of France and belonged to a family of former servants of the Empire who had been sulking for the last forty years in a sterile opposition. He had a small property in the Charente, where he spent the summer, and passed the rest of the time in Paris. Having instincts for government which he could not satisfy, he laid the blame for this on his family and on life, and thus thwarted, his character had grown tyrannical so that he acted the despot unconsciously to those nearest to him, as a right and duty that could not be disputed. The word tolerance had no meaning for him; for *he could not make a mistake.* Nevertheless he possessed intelligence, and moral vigour; he even had a heart, but all wrapped about and knotted like an old tree-trunk till such forces of expansion as he had within him were stunted. He could absorb nothing from the outside; when he read or travelled he saw everything with hostile eyes, his one wish was to go home; and as the bark was too thick to be penetrated, all his sap came from the foot of the tree—from the *dead.*

He was the type of that portion of the race which, stubborn but outworn, has not life enough to spread itself abroad, and shrinks into a sentiment of aggressive self-defence. This looks with suspicion and antipathy on the

young forces which overflow around it, at home and abroad; growing nations and classes, all the passionate awkward attempts at social and moral improvement. Like poor Barrès, and his dwarfed hero,* such people want walls and barriers, frontiers, and enemies. In this state of siege Vaucoux lived, and his family was forced to live in the same way. His wife who was a sweet, sad, effaced kind of person, found the only method of escape—and died. Left alone with his grief—of which he made a kind of rampart, as of everything about him—having only one son thirteen years of age, he had mounted guard before his youth and brought him up to do the same; strange that a man should bring a son into the world to fight against the future! Perhaps the boy, if let alone, would have found out life by instinct, but in the father's shut-up house, a sort of jail, he was his father's prey. They had few friends, few books, few, or rather one, newspaper whose petrified principles corresponded to Vaucoux' need for conservation, in the corpse-like meaning of the word. As his son, or his victim, could not get away from him, he inoculated him with all his own mental diseases; like those insects which deposit their eggs in the living bodies of others. And when the war broke out, he took him at once to a recruiting station and made him enlist. For a man of his sort, "Country" was the noblest of things—the holy of holies; he did not need to breathe the thrilling suggestion of the crowd, his head was already turned, and, besides, he never

* "Simon and I then understood our hatred of strangers and barbarians, and our egotism, in which we included ourselves and our entire small moral family.—*The first care of him who would wish to live must be to surround himself with high walls; but even in his closed garden he must introduce only those who are guided by the same feelings, and interests analogous to his own.*" "A Free Man."

In three lines, three times, this "free man" expresses the idea of "shutting-up," "closing," and "surrounding with walls."

went with the crowds; he carried "Country" about with him;—The Country and The Past,—The Eternally Past.

His son was killed, like Clerambault's son, and the sons of millions of other fathers, for the faith and the ideals of those fathers in which they did not believe.

Vaucoux had none of Clerambault's doubts; he did not know the meaning of the word, and if he could have permitted himself such a feeling he would have despised the idea. Hard man as he was, he had loved his son passionately, though he had never shown it; and he could think of no better way to prove it now than by a ferocious hatred for those who had killed him; not, of course, reckoning himself among the number.

There were not many methods of revenge open to a man of his age, rheumatic and stiff in one arm; but he tried to enlist and was rejected. He felt that something must be done, and all that he had left was his brain. Alone in his deserted house with the memory of his dead wife and child, he sat for hours brooding on these vindictive thoughts; and like a beast shaking the bars of its cage, waiting for the chance to spring, his mind raged furiously against the inhibitions the war put upon him with its iron circle of the trenches.

The clamours of the press drew his attention to Clerambault's articles which were intensely distasteful to him. The idea of snatching his precious hatred away from between his teeth! From the slight acquaintance that he had with Clerambault before the war, he felt an antipathy for him; as a writer, on account of the new form of his art, and as a man for numerous reasons: his love of life, and other men, his democratic ideals, his rather silly optimism, and his European aspirations. At the very first glance, with the instinct of a rheumatic in mind and body, Vaucoux had classed Clerambault as one of those pestilent persons who open doors and windows and make a draught

in that closed house, his Country. That is, as he understood the term, in his mind there could be no other. After this there was no need for the vociferations of the papers; in the author of "The Appeal to the Living," and the "Pardon from the Dead," he saw at once an agent of the enemy, and with his thirst for revenge, he knew the opportunity had come.

Nothing can be more convenient than to detest those who differ from you, especially when you do not understand them; but poor Clerambault had not this resource, for he did understand perfectly. These good people had had to bear injuries from the enemy; of course because they were struck by them, but also frankly, because of Injustice with a capital I; for in their short-sightedness it filled the field of vision. The capacity to feel and judge is very limited in an ordinary man; submerged as he is in the species, he clings to any driftwood; and just as he reduces the infinite number of shades in the river of light to a few colours, the good and evil that flow in the veins of the world are only perceptible to him when he has bottled a few samples, chosen among those around him. All good and bad then he has in his flask, and on these he can expend his whole power of liking or repulsion; witness the fact that to millions of excellent people the condemnation of Dreyfus, or the sinking of the "Lusitania," remains the crime of the century. They cannot see that the path of social life is paved with crime, and that they walk over it in perfect unconsciousness, profiting by injustices that they make no effort to prevent. Of all these, which are the worst? Those which rouse long echoes in the conscience of mankind, or those which are known alone to the stifled victim? Naturally, our worthy friends have not arms long enough to embrace all the misery of the world; they can only reach one perhaps, but that they press close to their heart; and when they have chosen a crime, they pour out upon it all the pent-up hatred within them;—when a dog has a bone to gnaw, it is wiser not to touch him.

Clerambault had tried to take his bone away from the

dog, and if he was bitten he had no right to complain; in point of fact he did not do so. Men are in the right to fight injustice wherever they see it; perhaps it is not their fault if they often see no more than its big toe, like Gulliver's at Brobdignag. Well, we must each do what we can; and these people could bite.

It was Good Friday, and the rising tide of invasion swept up towards the Ile de France. Even this day of sacred sorrow had not stopped the massacre, for the lay war knows nothing of the Truce of God. Christ had been bombarded in one of His churches, and the news of the murderous explosion at St. Gervais that afternoon spread at nightfall through the darkened city, wrapped in its grief, its rage, and its fear.

The sad little group of friends had gathered at Froment's house; each one had come hoping to meet the others, without previous appointment. They could see nothing but violence all about them; in the present as well as in the future, in the enemy's camp, in their own, on the side of revolutionists, and reactionaries as well. Their agony and their doubts met in one thought. The sculptor was saying:

"Our holiest convictions, our faith in peace and human brotherhood rest in vain on reason and love; is there any hope then that they can conquer men? We are too weak."

Clerambault, half-unconsciously, as the words of Isaiah came to his mind, uttered them aloud:

> "Darkness covers the earth,
> And the cloud envelops the people. . . ."

He stopped, but from the faintly-lighted bed came Froment's voice, continuing:

> "Rise, for on the tops of the mountains
> The light shineth forth. . . ."

"Yes, the light will dawn," said Madame Froment; she was sitting on the foot of the bed in the dark near Clerambault; he leaned forward and took her hand. It was as if a thrill widened through the room, like a ripple over water.

"Why do you say that?" asked the Count de Coulanges.

"Because I see *Him* plainly."

"I can see *Him* too," said Clerambault.

"Him? Whom do you mean?" asked Doctor Verrier. But before the answer could come, they all knew the word that would be said:

"He who bears the light, the God who will conquer. . . ."

"Are you waiting for a God?" said the old professor. "Do you believe in miracles?"

"We are the miracle, for is it not one that in this world of perpetual violence we have kept a constant faith in the love and the union of men?"

"Christ is expected for centuries," said Coulanges bitterly, "and when He comes, He is neglected, crucified, and then forgotten except by a handful of poor ignorant wretches, good if you like, but narrow. The handful grows larger, and for the space of a man's life, faith is in flower, but afterwards it is spoiled and betrayed by success, by ambitious disciples, by the Church; and so on for centuries . . . *Adveniat regnum tuum* . . . Where is the kingdom of God?"

"Within us," said Clerambault, "our trials and our hopes all go to form the eternal Christ. It ought to make us happy to think of the privilege that has been bestowed on us, to shelter in our hearts the new God like the Babe in the manger."

"And what proof have we of His coming?" said the doctor.

"Our existence," said Clerambault.

"Our sufferings," said Froment.

"Our misunderstood faith," said the sculptor.

"The fact alone that we are," went on Clerambault. "We are a living paradox thrown in the face of nature which denies it. A hundred times must the flame be kindled

and go out before it burns steadily. Every Christ, every God is tried in advance through a series of forerunners; they are everywhere, lost in space, lost in the ages; but though widely-separated, all of these lonely souls see the same luminous point on the horizon—the glance of the Saviour—who is coming."

"He is already come," said Froment.

When they separated, with a deep mutual feeling, but in silence,—for they feared to break the religious charm which held them,—each found himself alone in the dark street, but in each was the memory of a vision which they could hardly understand. The curtain had fallen; but they could never forget that they had seen it rise.

A FEW days after, Clerambault, who had been again summoned before the magistrate, came home splashed with mud from head to foot. His hat which he held in his hand, was a mere rag, and his hair was soaking. The woman, who opened the door, exclaimed at the sight of him, but he signed to her to keep still, and went into his room. Rosine was away, so the husband and wife were alone in the flat, where they only met at meals, saying as little to each other as possible. However, hearing the exclamation of the servant, Madame Clerambault feared some new misfortune and went to look for her husband. She too cried out when she saw him:

"Good Lord! what have you been doing now?"

"I slipped and fell," said he, trying to wipe off the traces of the accident.

"You fell?—turn round. What a state you are in! . . . One can't have a moment's peace when you are around. . . . You never look where you are going. There is mud up to your eyelids . . . all over your face!"

"Yes, I must have struck myself there. . . ."

"What unlucky people we are! . . . you 'think' that you struck your cheek? . . . you tripped and fell? . . ." And looking him in the face, she cried:

"It isn't true! . . .

"I did fall, I assure you. . . ."

"No, I know it is not true . . . tell me, . . . someone struck you . . .?" He did not answer. "They struck you, the brutes. My poor husband, to think that anyone should strike you! . . . And you so good, who never did harm to anyone in your life! How can people

be so wicked? " and she burst into tears as she threw her arms around him.

" My dear girl," said he, much touched. " It is not worth all these tears. See, you are getting all muddy, you ought not to touch me."

" That does not matter," said she. " I have more spots than that on my conscience. Forgive me! "

" Forgive you for what? Why do you say such things? "

" Because I have been wicked to you myself; I haven't understood you—(I don't think I ever shall)—but I do know that whatever you do, you only mean what is right. I ought to have stood up for you and I have not done it. I was angry with your foolishness, but it is really I that was the fool, and it vexed me too, when you got everyone down on you. But now . . . it is really too unjust! That a lot of men who are not fit to tie your shoe . . . that they should strike you! Let me kiss your poor muddy face! "

It was so sweet to find each other again!—When she had had a good cry on Clerambault's neck, she helped him to dress, then she bathed his cheek with arnica, and carried off his clothes to brush them. At table her eyes dwelt on him with the old affectionate care, while he tried to calm her fears by talking of familiar things. To be alone together without the children took them back to the old days, the early times of their marriage. And the memory had a sad, quiet sweetness—as the evening angelus spreads through the growing gloom a last softened glory from the angelus of noon.

About ten o'clock the bell rang, and Moreau came in with his friend Gillot. They had read the evening papers which gave an account of the incident—from their point of view; some spoke of the " spontaneous " indignation of the crowd and approved of the rebuke inflicted by popular contempt. Others, and they were the more serious sheets,

deprecated lynch law in the public streets, as a matter of principle, but blamed the weakness of the authorities, who were afraid to throw light on all the facts.

It was not impossible that this mild criticism of the government was inspired by the government itself; for politicians know how to manage so that their hand may be forced, when they have an end in view of which they are not exactly proud. The arrest of Clerambault seemed imminent, and Moreau and his comrade were very uneasy; but Clerambault signed to them to say nothing before his wife, and after a few words on the event of the day, which they treated rather lightly, he took them both into his study and asked them to tell him plainly what was the matter.

They showed him a vicious article in the nationalist paper which had been active against Clerambault for weeks, and which was so encouraged by the manifestation of the day that it called on all its friends to renew the attack the next morning. Moreau and Gillot foresaw that there would be trouble when Clerambault went to the Palais, and they had come to beg him to stay in the house. Knowing his timidity, they thought that there would be no difficulty in persuading him to this, but just as it had been the day Moreau had found him disputing in the street, he did not now seem to grasp the situation.

"Stay at home, why? I am perfectly well."

"We think it would be more prudent."

"On the contrary, it would do me good to go out for a little while."

"You don't know what might happen."

"As to that one never knows; it will be time enough to worry when it comes."

"To be perfectly frank then, you are in danger; the feeling has been worked up against you for a long time, till now you are so hated that people's eyes almost start out of their heads at the sound of your name;—idiots!

they know nothing about you but what they see in the papers; but their leaders want a row, they have been so stupid that your articles have had much more publicity than they intended; they are afraid that your ideas will spread, and they want to make an example of you that will discourage anyone who might be disposed to follow you."

"If that is true," said Clerambault, "and I really have followers,—something I did not know before,—this is not the moment to keep out of the way; if they want to make an example of me, I cannot balk them." This was said in so pleasant a way, that they asked themselves if he really understood.

"You are taking a terrible risk," persisted Gillot.

"Well, my friend, everyone has to take risks nowadays."

"It ought, at least, to be of some use,—why play into their hands? There is no need to throw yourself into the jaws of the wolves."

"It seems to me on the contrary, that it might be very useful," said Clerambault, "and that the wolf would find himself in the wrong box after all; let me explain to you. This will spread our ideas, for violence always consecrates the persecuted cause. They want to intimidate, and so they will. Everyone will be frightened—their own side, all the hesitaters, and timorous folk. Let them be unjust, it will rebound on their own heads." He seemed to forget that it might also fall on his.

They saw that he had made up his mind, and felt an increased respect for him, but they also felt much more anxious, and this led them to say:

"If that is the case, we will get all our friends together, and go with you."

"No, no, what a ridiculous idea! . . . nothing will happen after all." Seeing that their remonstrances were useless, Moreau made a last attempt: "You can't keep me from coming with you," said he. "I am an obstinate man

myself, you can't get rid of me; I will wait for you, if I have to sit on that bench outside your door all night! "

" Go and spend the night in your bed, my dear fellow," said Clerambault, " and sleep soundly. Come with me in the morning if you like, but it will be time lost; nothing is going to happen;—but kiss me, all the same! " After an affectionate hug, they went towards the door, when Gillot paused a moment: " We must look after you a little, you know," said he, " we feel as if you were a sort of father to us."

" So I am," said Clerambault with his beaming smile; his own boy was in his mind. He closed the door, and stood for some minutes with the lamp in his hand in the vestibule before he realised where he was. It was nearly midnight and he was very tired, but, instead of going into the bedroom, he mechanically turned again towards his study;—the apartment, the house, the street were all asleep. Almost without seeing it, he stared vaguely at the light shining on the frame of an engraving of Rembrandt's, The Resurrection of Lazarus, which hung on the opposite wall. . . . A dear figure seemed to enter the room; . . . it came in silently, and stood beside him.

" Are you satisfied now? " he thought. " Is this what you wished? " And Maxime answered: " Yes," then added with meaning:

" I have found it very hard to teach you, Papa."

" Yes," said Clerambault, " there is much that we can learn from our sons." And they smiled at each other in the silence.

WHEN Clerambault at last went to bed, his wife was sound asleep. She was one of those people whom nothing can keep awake, who sink into profound slumber as soon as their heads touch the pillow. But Clerambault could not follow her example; he lay on his back with his eyes open, staring into the darkness, all through the rest of the night.

There were pale glimmers from the street in the half-shadow; and a quiet star or two high up in a dark sky; one seemed to be falling in a great half-circle—it was only an airplane keeping watch over the sleeping city. Clerambault followed its sweep with his eyes, and seemed to fly with it, the distant hum of the human planet coming faintly to his ear, like a strange music of the spheres not foreseen by Ionian sages.

He felt happy, for the burden was lifted from his body and soul, his whole being seemed to be relaxed, to float in air. Pictures of the past day with its agitations and fatigues, passed before his eyes, but did not disturb him. An old man hustled by a mob of young *bourgeois* . . . He could hear their loud voices, too loud—but now they had vanished like faces that you catch a glimpse of from a moving train. The train flies on and the vision disappears in the roaring tunnel. . . . There is the sombre sky again, and the mysterious star, still falling. Silent spaces around, the clear darkness, and the cool fresh air blowing on his soul; all infinity in one tiny drop of life, in a heart whose spark flickers to its end, but knows it is free, and that its vast home is near.

Like a good steward of the treasure placed in his charge, Clerambault made up the account of his day. He looked

back on his attempts, his efforts, his impulses, his mistakes; how little remained of his life, for nearly all that he had built up he had afterwards destroyed with his own hands. He had first stated, then denied, and had never ceased to wander in the forest of doubts and contradictions; often torn and bruised, with no guide but the stars half-seen through the branches. What meaning had there been in this long troubled course, now ending in darkness? One only, he had been free.

Free! . . . What was this freedom, then, which intoxicated him so completely? This liberty of which he was the master and the slave—this imperious need to be free? He knew well enough that no more than others was he emancipated from the eternal bonds; but the orders that he obeyed differed from others; all are not alike. The word liberty is only one of the clear high commands of the invisible sovereign who rules the world . . . whom we call necessity. She it is who excites those of the advance-guard to rebel, and causes them to break with the heavy past which the blind multitude drags along behind it; for she is the battle-field of the eternal present, where the past and the future must ever strive together, and on this field the ancient laws are conquered, that they may give place to new laws, which will be conquered in their turn.

O Liberty! Thou art always in chains, but they are not the heavy fetters of the past; for each struggle has enlarged thy prison. Who can tell? Perhaps later, when the prison walls have been thrown down. . . . But in the meanwhile, those whom thou wouldst save resist thee. Thou art called the Public Enemy, or The One against All. To think that this nickname should have been fastened on the weak, ordinary Clerambault! But he did not remember that at this moment, his thoughts were filled with the one who has always existed, ever since man has been known on the

earth; the one who has never ceased to fight their follies, that they may be delivered—*The One whom All oppose.* . . . How many times throughout the ages have they rejected and crushed him! But in the midst of his agony a supernatural joy sustains him; he is the sacred golden seed of liberty, which fell from we know not what sheaf, and in the darkness of destiny has sowed the germs of light, ever since the first chaos. In the depths of the savage heart of man, the frail atom found shelter, it fought against elementary laws which grind and bend living things; but tirelessly the small golden seed grew, and man the weakest of all creatures, marched against nature and fought her. Each step cost a drop of his blood, in this gigantic duel; he has had to fight nature not only in the world without, but within himself, since he is a part of her. This is the hardest battle, that waged by the man divided against himself; and in the end who will conquer? On the one side is nature with her chariot of iron, in which she hurls worlds and peoples into the abyss; and on the other is only,—The Word. It is no wonder that you laugh, ye slaves! no wonder the servants of force say that it is like "a cur barking at the wheels of an express-train." Yes, if man were only a fragment of matter writhing in vain beneath the hammer of fate; but there is a spirit within him which knows how to smite Achilles on his heel, and Goliath in his forehead. Let him but wrench off a nut, the swift train is overturned, its course stayed. Planetary swirls, obscure masses of human-kind, roll down through the ages lighted by flashes of the liberating Spirit: Buddha, the Sages, Jesus—all breakers of chains! I can see the lightning coming, feel it thrill through me, like sparks that fly up beneath the horse's hoofs. The air vibrates with it, as the thick clouds of hate come together with a crash. The flame springs up! If you *are* alone against the world, have you cause to complain? You have

escaped the crushing yoke, fought your way through, like a nightmare in which one struggles and tears oneself out of the dark waters. You sink, choking, and all at once with a despairing effort you throw yourself beyond the reach of the wave, and sink exhausted but safe on the shore. These people wound me? So much the better, I shall wake up in the free air.

Yes, threatening world, I am indeed free from your fetters, I can never be chained again, and my detested will with which I so often had to fight, my will is now in you. You wanted, like me, to be free, and that made you suffer, and made you my enemy; but now even if you kill me, you have seen the light in me, and once seen, you can no longer reject it. Strike then! But know that in fighting against me you fight yourself also; you are beaten in advance, and when I defend myself, it is you that I defend as well. *The One against All* is the *One for All,* and soon will be *The One with All.*

I shall no longer be solitary! I feel that I have never been in truth alone. My brothers of the world, you may indeed be scattered afar over the earth like a handful of grain, but I know that you are here beside me. The thought of a man is not solitary; the idea which grows in him springs up in others; when he feels it in his heart, let him rejoice, no matter how unhappy, how injured he may be, for it is the earth reviving. The first spark in a lonely soul is the point of the ray which will pierce the night. So, welcome, Light. Break through the night which is around and within me! . . . "Clerambault."

THE fresh light of day returned, ever young and new, untouched by the stains of men which the sun drinks up like a morning mist.

Madame Clerambault woke, and when she saw her husband with open eyes, she thought that he too had just waked up.

"You had a good sleep," said she. "I don't think you stirred all night long." He did not contradict her, but thought of the vast distances he had traversed in the spirit, that fiery bird that flies through the night. . . . But feeling that he had come back to earth, he got up.

At the same hour another man rose, who had also passed a sleepless night, who had also evoked his dead son, and thought of Clerambault whom he did not know, with fierce hatred.

A letter came from Rosine by the first mail, containing a secret that Clerambault had guessed long ago. Daniel had spoken to his parents, and the marriage would take place the next time he came home from the front. She went through the form of asking the consent of her father and mother, but she knew that her wishes were theirs. Her letter radiated happiness and a triumphant security that nothing could shake. The sad riddle of the agonised world had found an answer, and in the absorption of her young love the universal suffering did not seem too high a price for the flower that bloomed for her on this bloody stem. In the midst of it all, she was tender and compassionate as usual, remembering the troubles of others, her father and his worries. But she seemed to put her happy arms about them, with a simple affectionate conceit, as if she said:

" Please don't worry any more over all these ideas, darlings! It is foolish of you to be sad, when you see that happiness is coming."

Clerambault smiled tenderly as he read the letter. No doubt happiness was on the way, but some of us cannot wait for it. " Greet it from me, my little Rose, and do not let it fly away."

About eleven o'clock the Count de Coulanges came to ask after him; he had seen Moreau and Gillot mounting guard before the door. They had come to escort Clerambault according to their promise, but they had not dared to come up because they were an hour too early. Clerambault sent for them, laughing at their excess of zeal, and they admitted that they had thought him perfectly capable of sneaking out of the house without waiting for them; an idea which he confessed had crossed his mind.

The news from the front was good; during the last few days the German offensive had wavered; strange signs of weakness began to appear; and well-founded rumours made it evident that there was a secret disorganisation in the formidable mass. People said that the limit of his strength had been passed and that the athlete was exhausted. There was talk also of contagion from the Russian revolutionary spirit brought by the German troops that had been on the Eastern Front.

With the usual mobility of the French mind, the pessimists of yesterday began to shout for the approaching victory. Already Moreau discounted the calming down of passions and the return to common sense. The reconciliation of the nations and the triumph of Clerambault's ideas would follow shortly. He advised them not to deceive themselves too much, and amused himself by describing what would happen when peace was signed; for peace would have to come some day.

"I am going to pretend," said he, "that I am hovering over the town—like the devil on two sticks—the first night after the armistice. I see innumerable sorrowing hearts behind shutters closed against the shouts in the streets. Hearts straining all through these years towards a victory that would lend meaning to their grief; and now they can let go—or break down, sleep, die, perhaps. The politicians will reflect on the quickest and most lucrative way to exploit the success, or turn a somersault if they have guessed wrong. The professional soldiers will keep the war going as long as they can, and when that is stopped, they will plan for another in the shortest possible time. Before-the-war pacifists will all come out of their holes, and be found at their posts, with touching demonstrations of joy, while their old leaders who have been beating the drum in the rear for over five years will reappear with olive branches in their hands, smiling and talking of brotherly love. The men who swore never to forget when they were in the trenches will accept all the explanations and congratulations that are offered them. It is such a bore not to forget! Five years of exhausting fatigue make you accept anything through sheer weariness or boredom, or the wish to finish it all, so the flourishes of triumph will drown the cries of the vanquished. The one thought of most people will be to go back to their sleepy before-the-war habits; first they will dance on the graves, and then lie down and go to sleep on them, till after a while the war will be only something to boast about in the evening. Perhaps they will succeed in forgetting it so entirely, that the Dance of Death can be resumed;—not all at once, of course, but later when we have had a good rest. So there will be peace everywhere, till the time when it will be war everywhere again. In the meaning that is now given to the words, my friends, peace and war are just different labels for the same bottle. It reminds me of what

King Bomba said of his valiant soldiers; dress them in red or in green as you choose, they will take to their heels just the same. One says peace and the other war, but neither means anything, there is only universal servitude, multitudes swept along like the ebb and flow of tides; and this will continue as long as no strong souls raise themselves above the human ocean, as long as no one dares to fight against the fate that sways these great masses."

"Fight against nature," said Coulanges. "Would you resist her laws?"

"There are no immutable laws," said Clerambault, laws like beings, live, change, and die. It is the duty of the spirit, not to accept these as the Stoics taught us, but rather to modify and shape them to our needs. Laws are the outside form of the soul, and if it grows they must grow also. The only just laws are those that suit me. Am I wrong in thinking that the shoe should be made to fit the foot, not the foot for the shoe?"

"I do not say that you are wrong," said the Count, "we force nature all the time in cattle-breeding, so that even the shape and instincts of the animals are modified; why not the human creature? No, far from blaming you, I maintain on the contrary that the object and the duty of every man worthy of the name is, just as you say, to alter human nature. It is the source of all real progress; even to strive after the impossible has a concrete value. But that does not mean that we shall succeed in what we undertake."

"It is possible that we may not succeed for ourselves and our children; it is, even more, probable. Perhaps our unhappy nation, the entire West is on the downward path. There are many things that make me fear that we are hastening to our fall; our vices and our virtues, which are almost equally injurious, the pride and hatred, the jealous spite worthy of a big village, the endless chain of revenges,

the blind obstinacy, the clinging to the past with its superannuated conceptions of honour and duty, which causes us to sacrifice the future for the past; all these make me fear that the terrible warning of this war has taught nothing to our slothful and turbulent heroism. There was a time when I should have been overwhelmed by such a thought as this, but now I feel lifted above it, as I am above my own mortal body; the only tie between me and it is made of pity. My spirit is brother to that which, on the other side of the globe, is now touched by the new fire. Do you remember the beautiful words of the Seer of St. Jean d'Acre? *

'The Sun of Truth is like our sun. It rises in many different places. One day it appears in the sign of Cancer, on another it rises in Libra, but it is always the same sun. Once the Sun of Truth rose in the constellation of Abraham, and set in that of Moses, flaming over the whole horizon; and later it was seen in the sign of Christ, bright and resplendent. When its light shone over Sinai, the followers of Abraham were blinded. But wherever the sun may rise, my eyes will be fixed upon it; even if it should appear in the west it will always be the sun.'"

"*'C'est du Nord aujourd'hui que nous vient la lumière,'*" † said Moreau, laughing ("It is from the North that our light comes today").

* Reference to Abdul Baha, at present the head of the Babists or Bahaists. He was at that time a prisoner at St. Jean d'Acre. See "Lessons of St. Jean d'Acre," by Abdul Baha, collected by Laura Clifford Barney. (Author.)

† A famous line of Voltaire's. (Author.)

THOUGH the hearing was set for one o'clock, and it was now barely twelve, Clerambault wanted to start at once, he was so afraid of being late.

They had not far to go, and indeed his friends had no need to protect him against the rabble which hung about the Palais de Justice, a crowd which in any case was considerably thinned out by the morning's news. There were only a few curs, more noisy than dangerous, who might have snapped at their heels.

They had reached the corner of the Rue Vaugirard and the Rue d'Assas, when Clerambault, finding that he had forgotten an important paper, went back to look for it in his apartment; the others stood there waiting for him. They saw him come out and cross the street. On the opposite sidewalk, near a cab-stand, was a well-dressed man of about his own age, grey-haired, not very tall, and rather stout. They saw this person go up to Clerambault —it all passed so quickly that they had no time even to cry out. There was a brief exchange of words, an arm raised, a shot!—they saw him totter, and ran up. Too late.

They laid him down on a bench; a little crowd gathered, more curious than shocked (people had seen so many things of this kind), looking over each other's shoulders:

"Who is it?"

"A defeatist."

"Serve him right, then! The dirty beasts have done us harm enough!"

"I don't know, there are worse things than to want the war to be over."

"There is only one way to finish it; we must fight it

out. It is the pacifists' fault that it has dragged on so long."

"You might almost say that they were the cause of it; the boches counted on them. Without those fools there wouldn't have been any war." Clerambault lying there half-unconscious, thought of the old woman who threw her fagot on the wood stacked around John Huss . . . *Sancta simplicitas.*

Vaucoux had not attempted to get away, but let them take the revolver out of his hand without resistance. They held his arms fast, and he stood looking at his victim, whose eyes met his; each thought of his son.

Moreau, much excited, spoke threateningly to Vaucoux; who, like an impassive image of hatred, only answered briefly: "I have killed the Adversary, the Enemy."

A faint smile hovered on Clerambault's lips as he looked at Vaucoux. "My poor friend," he thought, "It is within you yourself that the Enemy lies,"—his eyes closed . . . centuries seemed to pass. . . . "There are no enemies . . ." and Clerambault entered into the peace of the worlds to come.

SEEING that he had lost consciousness, his friends carried him into Froment's house which was close by; but he was dead before they reached it.

They laid him on a bed, in a room beside that in which the young paralytic lay with his friends now gathered round him. The door remained open. The spirit of the dead man seemed near them.

Moreau spoke bitterly of the absurdity of this murder; why not strike one of the great pirates of the triumphant reaction, or a recognised head of the revolutionary group? Why choose this inoffensive, unbiassed man, who was kind to everyone, and almost too comprehending to all sides?

"Hatred makes no mistakes," said Edmé Froment. "It has been guided by a sure instinct to the right mark; for an enemy often sees more clearly than a friend. No, there is no doubt about it, the most dangerous adversary of society and the established order in this world of violence, falsehood, and base compromises, is, and has always been, the man of peace and a free conscience. The crucifixion of Jesus was no accident; He had to be put to death. He would be executed today; for a great evangelist is a revolutionary, and the most radical of all. He is the inaccessible source from whence revolutions break through the hard ground, the eternal principle of non-submission of the spirit to Caesar, no matter who he may be—the unjust force. This explains the hatred of those servants of the State, the domesticated peoples, for the insulted Christ who looks at them in silence, and also for His disciples, for us, the eternal insurrectionists, the conscientious objectors to tyranny from high or low, to that of today or tomorrow. . . . for us, who go before One